LETTERS

ADDRESSED

TO A YOUNG MAN,

&c. &c.

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ADDRESSED

TO A YOUNG MAN,

ON HIS FIRST ENTERING INTO LIFE,

AND

ADAPTED TO THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PRESENT TIMES.

BY MRS. WEST.

Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed th[illegible]o according to thy word. PSALM cxix. v. 9.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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LETTERS,

&c. &c. &c.

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR SON,

IT is the practice of many moralists, to decry the opinion of the world, and to represent it as such an assemblage of folly and inconsistency, as to be utterly unworthy of the regard of a rational being. My own sentiments are directly opposite; for, were I to speak of this same comprehensive aggregate, I should say, that whenever it has a proper opportunity of

knowing the merits of any question, its verdict is respectable. It is hasty, rash, and inclined to prejudge a cause; but the principles upon which its judgment is generally awarded, are wise, just, and liberal. Indeed, I think it *talks* better than it *acts*: for its actions are swayed by *individual* passions; whereas the decisions of a *collective* body possess the advantage of the discernment and the reason of the whole, while passions are seldom contagious, except when we have a *personal* interest in the case in dispute. Fools, indeed, adopt the popular opinion, for the sake of sailing with the tide; but a moderate understanding, before it absolutely submits to the injunctions of custom, will employ some pains to investigate the propriety of its decrees. For, though *this* degree of capacity is not calculated to make discoveries, it is extremely well adapted to analyse any

proposition that is submitted to its inspection. I do not pretend to calculate with mathematical accuracy; but I suppose that popular opinion, or, if you please, the judgment of the world, may be thus fairly defined: wise men take the lead, and determine upon every given case. Men of plain sense imbibe and diffuse the opinions of the wise, because they think them just. Fools do the same, either from their reverence to fashion, or because they have not capacity to strike out a novel idea.

Perhaps one reason for my treating the opinion of the world with more deference than several excellent moralists have done, may arise from my viewing it through a different medium. They who despise its award, seem to have confused the idea of the world at large with that of the depraved vicious part of it. I know that a knot of atheists,

of a club of libertines, are extremely apt to call themselves the world; and I know too, that unfortunate maniacs, in their fits of frenzy, somehow or other connect themselves with royalty. I should as soon admit the validity of one pretension, as that of the other. He whose perverted judgment cannot discover his duty to his God, and he who by his depraved conduct will not acknowledge his duty to man, are as much disjointed from the body of their species, as the unhappy wretch whose perverted imagination "sees more devils than vast hell can hold." They may term themselves the world if they please, and arrogate the praise due to superior wisdom and respectability; and parrots and monkeys may call themselves men and women, because they have some similar faculties. But it would be as expedient to look for *sound* sense and *good* morals,

the essentials of true judgment, in Bedlam and Newgate, as in the haunts of those, who, after having set out with despising general opinion, pretend to be its regulators; who have defied every restraint, and then presume to give law to their fellow-creatures.

I do not, however, seek for "The World" in a supposed association of the wise and good; because I fear that such associations are, generally speaking, fanciful, and savour more of the golden age than of any real picture of human nature. My world consists, as I have before observed, of wise men, people of plain sense, and fools. I exclude from it the *totally* (that is, the *avowedly*) profane. People who pique themselves upon being wiser than their fellow-creatures, who glory in undoing what others have done, in despising all restraints, and defying all censures, what-

ever may be their sphere of life, do not deserve the epithet of *men*. They belong to another order of beings, who are not *frail*, but *determindedly* wicked. What that order is, I will leave *them* to decide; only observing, that since many of them have been anxious to depose the Prince of Darkness from his infernal throne, they may, perhaps, have a consciousness that there is no necessity for a tempter, to excite actions of open rebellion against the great Governor of Heaven and Earth.

I should be grieved to my inmost soul, if I thought that the above description was applicable to any large portion of my fellow-creatures. I am, on the contrary, persuaded, that these determined desperadoes are as contemptible in numbers as they are in character; and that their *clamour* is merely an artful cover to conceal their *real* insignificance. I

am extremely unwilling that their blasphemous absurdities should be deemed the collective voice of the human race, lest they should draw away a whole shoal of weak minds, who, with no worse design than that of being very much the fashion, would find themselves metamorphosed into complete villains.

Even supposing it were allowable to admit, that the most depraved part of mankind should give law to the rest, merely because they are the most turbulent, it would not follow that it would be *right* for us to subscribe to their opinions, because they then become that "wicked and corrupt world" which we have engaged to *renounce*. Indeed, granting to general opinion its utmost latitude of power, we may not allow that it can overthrow any known established truth, either in fact or in morals. The most civilized part of the world has,

for many ages, agreed to acknowledge the veracity of the Christian revelation: It has been our unhappy lot to see a nation publicly disclaim it, and glory in stepping back to natural religion, as if they had made some beneficial discovery, in turning from a pure law to a gross and obscure one, and in shutting their eyes on the noon-day sun, while they worshipped a star. Had you been in France when this dreadful alteration took place, general opinion would not have *justified* your apostacy, even supposing that it had been sufficiently universal to have *countenanced* it; which, I trust, was far from the real case. Again, the earlier writers on the subject of morals have taught us, that virtue consists in keeping our passions in subjection; in improving our understandings; in fulfilling the duties of that state of life in which we are placed; and in

taking advantage of the discoveries of past ages, in order to render ourselves wiser and better. A new set of philosophists, infatuated by a perverted taste for novelty, have inverted these rules. Instead of subduing our passions, they advise us to strengthen them; for they say, that no *natural* appetite can be *criminal*. Actions, which were heretofore esteemed to be vicious, are pronounced to be proofs of virtue; sentiment is declared to be a better guide than principle; distinction of rank, on which civil society has been every where founded, is termed by these sages a cruel and unjust tyranny; and, lest former ages should rise and condemn us for fools, a sweeping clause is added, which, without examination or exception, sets down all past generations as absolute *dotards*, who successively dozed away an useless existence

in merited slavery and well-deserved infamy.

The good sense of this nation, my dear boy, has hitherto happily resisted the fanaticism of these wild unsupported notions. But, as the missionaries who propound them are indefatigable in their endeavours to make converts, they *may* meet with sufficient success to enable their unblushing effrontrey to affirm, that the popular voice is on their side, and thus seduce those weaks minds, that passively follow the multitude, to add to their *nominal* strength. But were the corruption really as general as it was in Sodom, you must imitate righteous Lot. No force of numbers can make that right which is positively wrong.

I have bestowed too much pains in proving, what is indeed self-evident, that the decisions of the worthless part of our

species, being formed upon false principles, are entitled to no regard. Error, inadvertence, hastiness, and indolence, often occasion wrong decisions among people of decent character; but, if your judges are in themselves respectable, I would not have you treat their opinions with contempt because they are in some degree erroneous, but endeavour to discover the grounds on which they are formed. I am now speaking of that sort of judgment which all of us, at different times, pass on each other's conduct; and I am supposing that you *know* yourself to be blamed for some particular action, or mode of behaviour. If candid and worthy people condemn you, I cannot advise you to be indifferent to their censures. Such carelessness would argue a degree of pride highly improper in any man, and more especially so in a young man. For though the prevalent

style of behaviour among the rising generation may seem to indicate the contrary, there is nothing so prejudicial to the character of a person who is entering into the world as opinionativeness and self-conceit. It is a *mortal* enemy to every species of improvement, keeping the mind in a state of torpor, or I should rather say of inebriety, and *disgusting* people, who would otherwise have felt inclined to render the *improvident* coxcomb real acts of friendship. I feel happy in the idea that you have no *natural* tendency to this fault; and, in order to prevent you from *acquiring* it by imitation, let me strongly place before your eyes, as the best inducements to right conduct—first, religious principle, and next the esteem of the virtuous and the good. The censures of a person of this description cannot be unimportant; and, whenever they fall upon you, do not

permit self-love to treat them lightly, or to represent them as arising from a prejudiced view of the subject, from carelessness, or from ill-will. Consider that, though it is possible for your judge to have been mistaken, it is equally possible that you may have been wrong; not, perhaps, in so great a degree as is supposed, yet sufficiently so to be blameable. Instead, therefore, of piquing yourself upon your supposed innate independence, recollect that observers are more likely to be dispassioned and unprejudiced than yourself. Investigate your conduct, but do not try it by the suggestions of vanity. Use the same rules which you would refer to in judging the conduct of another. If you find that you have acted wrong, endeavour at future amendment; and thus you will derive one great advantage from attending to the

opinions of others,—I mean the correction of your own foibles.

But if, on revision of your past behaviour, you should find that you have done nothing wrong, you are at liberty to suppose that your case has been misrepresented; and, in consequence, endeavour to have it fairly stated. It so frequently happens that the best and wisest fall into mistakes, that your respect for persons, who bear the essential mark of those qualities, need not be diminished by knowing that they have judged ill. It is much more candid (much more christian-like I should say) to form this conclusion, than to suppose that your censurers entertain any *preconceived* prejudice or *inherent* dislike against you. I know that it is a custom with many people, to allow themselves to say, "I don't care what such persons

say of me, for I know they hate me." If this were truth, one might answer, "Either they are very detestable people, or you deserve to be hated." As our religion teaches us not to *hate* others, so, sanctioning the secret impulses of self-love, it bids us avoid *incurring* the hatred of any one. What have you done to excite animosity? we may fairly proceed to inquire. Have you been froward, contentious, overbearing, envious, or oppressive? Have you been guilty of defamation, of any act of revenge, or ill-will? Have you even been purposely rude and negligent, or so far inattentive as to transgress the established forms of good breeding? If you have, your enemy, indeed, may be culpable, but you are far from innocent. Do not complain of that rancour which your behaviour justifies, and which a change in your conduct might happily remove.

"If you ask me, whether such a sentiment as settled dislike can really exist, I must answer, with great concern, that either from envy at some supposed pre-eminence, or from a naturally saturnine malevolent disposition, irreconcilable enmity sometimes exists in a human breast, and defies all the laws of God and man. But dispositions so truly diabolical are extremely rare. I have seldom met with an instance, in which unfavourable impressions did not arise from a mistaken idea of each other's character: from the exaggeration of that pestilent race of people, tale-bearers; from the suspicion that the person in question harbours a bad opinion of us, which we are resolved to repay in kind; or from too little desire to please, proceeding from a similar prejudice to that of which we complain. The amiable character of Sir Charles Grandison uniformly supports this idea of human nature; and whenever he is

pestered with the complaints of disputants, he constantly refers them to "mistake—unhappy misapprehension." In a comedy of Mrs. Inchbald's, a very humorous effect is produced, from one of the characters reconciling a set of petulant beings, by persuading them, separately, that they all said exceedingly handsome things of each other. I am convinced, that this suggestion is not merely the *romantic* whim of the comic muse, but that it might be rendered extremely serviceable in real life.

I have, however, wandered from the subject which I was recommending to your consideration. Your character is now forming; and a bold contempt for the opinions of others, with a confidence in self-desert, glossed by the alluring name of independence, has many charms in the eyes of young men. As a guard against dangerous mistakes, as an induce-

ment to the acquisition of praise-worthy qualities, I *recommend* to you a *deference* to the opinions of others; and I entreat you to admit, with the most *guarded* caution, the popular aphorism of—"the conscious mind is its own awful world." It may be properly used by innocent victims suffering under the gripe of tyranny, the tortures of persecution, or the accusations of undeserved ignominy; but few of us are martyrs or confessors; and, strictly speaking, there are few despots and persecutors in the world. It is a very great fault to apply to ordinary occasions, sentiments that only suit *peculiar* uncommon circumstances. Many a love-sick girl has turned her father into a remorseless Bajazet, because he interdicted her *pure disinterested* attachment to her adorable Jemmy Jessamy. Many a distracted wife, without either the beauty, innocence, or sim-

plicity of Desdemona, has really converted her liege lord into a raging Othello; not because she entreated that Cassio might keep his place, but because she refused to discharge the duties of her own. And, not to be partially servere on my own sex, I have the honour of knowing some very respectable fathers, whom I should term uniformly prudent, and kind to their families; and yet, if you will believe the account which their sons give, the young Hopefuls are daily suffering all the tortures of victims confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition. In the mercantile world, the *few* masters who conscientiously discharge their important trust, by keeping a watchful eye over their young charges, are also generally honoured with the appellative of Bashaws, and history is ransacked for some grim tyrant as a proper archetype in cruelty.

I do not, however, wish to destroy all self-regard, or to check all enthusiasm. Moderation in every thing, is the principle by which I wish to guide my advice; and I am aware, that, though enthusiasm and confidence are dangerous qualities, some portion of them is requisite to form an energetic character. In writing to a young person, whose pulse beats high with generous sentiment, and who has not yet encountered those rude rebuffs from opposing interests, that will certainly abate the full dependence on his own powers, which the morn of life encourages, I run no hazard in laying a great stress upon prudence, moderation, deference, and humility. I *know* that you will never urge these qualities into the extreme of timidity; but I *do not* know how far romantic passions, and a sense of independence, may carry you.

Learn to have a deference for others, and early acquire habits of proper subordination. By this practice you will learn to think justly, and you will know how to direct others, should Providence so far change your situation as to remove you from the *ruled* to the *ruling* side. I am not so absurd as to suppose, that it is even possible for you to rise to any *high station* in life. Such ideas would be very improper for any parent to inculcate; for they would create expectations that are not realized above once in an age. In the instance in which they succeed, they are likely to form a despot; and wherever they are defeated, a misanthrope. What I allude to is, that *moderate* success, which honesty and diligence generally obtain, in the rank of life in which they are placed. Yet, even in respect of this *allowable* ambition, be not too sanguine of success. Fix

your chief attention on the requisites necessary to your advancement; and, when you have done this, leave the event to Heaven. Remember, that in every line of business you must have many competitors, who start with you to gain the same goal. Their talents and opportunities may, in every respect, be equal to yours; and, if their exertions are greater, or their friends more desirous to promote their interests, than yours are anxious to serve you, success is the natural consequence; but do not let your failure induce you to give up the pursuit in despair. Endeavour, by your behaviour, to excite greater attention in the minds of those who can assist you. And remember, that, since Christianity teaches you to look to a future state for retribution, those chastisements which appear in the form of pecuniary disappointments, are not marks of Divine

displeasure. It may be, that, at the time you made your last effort for advancement, Providence foresaw that it would be to your advantage to continue in a low dependent station. Do not murmur at its decrees, but practice the virtues which that station prescribes. Whenever a fair opening presents itself, try again with *firmness* and *resolution* as to the means, with *submission* as to the event. Never suffer despair to get possession of you; it breaks the spring of the soul, and not only destroys your peace of mind, but actually annihilates those qualities which would induce others to assist you, and thus leaves you destitute when you are most in want of friends. For pity, believe me, is a weak inefficient sentiment; it may sometimes prompt the liberal to bestow *spontaneous* relief on a miserable object; but that sort of interest which inclines the opu-

lent or the powerful to those *reiterated* acts of kindness, or that active exertion, which is necessary to raise any person to an advantageous situation, must flow from a persuasion that the *protegée* possesses some valuable quality, which will at a future period do credit to their *discerning* recommendation. This, you will observe, is ascribing generosity and friendship to self-love, a principle which I have warmly reprobated; but I would no more endeavour to *eradicate* self-love than any other of the passions, which were all implanted in our bosoms for wise and good purposes, and are only culpable when, by improper indulgences, we suffer them to deviate into criminal excesses. Self-love is an active invigorating principle; but when it degenerates into selfishness, it becomes a mean degrading vice. In the instance under consideration, I cannot see that

even christian charity, taken in its largest and most comprehensive sense, can condemn such a due regard to our own characters, as would restrain us from pressing the interests of a person whom we know to be unequal to the station which he desires either from some natural defect, or from some acquired disadvantage. Ambition is no recommendation in the eye of another, however self-confidence may second its suggestions. From listening to the delusions of the most puerile vanity, we become ignorant pretenders in one stage of life, and gloomy misanthropes, or discontented politicians in another. The complaints that we hourly hear against the injustice of the world, the inequality of rank, the caprice of Fortune, the tyranny of civil governments, the pride and oppression of the great, and in short, the whole train of grievances with which loud de-

claimers swell their popular harangues, will, when traced to their true source, be found to proceed, in general, from disappointed arrogance; from detected knavery; from indolence, which wished to fatten on the earnings of industry; or from dissipation, which solaced itself in the enjoyments of opulence without having sufficient energy to procure the decencies of competence. The following sentiments from Dr. Young are much oftener realised than disproved:

"Look into those they call unfortunate,
And closer view'd, you'll find they were unwise;
Some flaw in their own conduct lies beneath;
And 'twas the trick of fools to save their credit,
Which brought another language into use."

Nothing can be a more unjust picture of life, than to suppose that knaves are generally most successful, or that integrity is a hinderance to advancement. The truth is, that honesty is so abso-

lutely necessary in all situations, that they who have it not are compelled to affect it. Now, as it only belongs to Omniscience to search the heart, it often happens that the *counterfeit* may be so well executed as not only to pass for the true, but also to eclipse it; especially if genuine worth will neglect to acquire that polish which is the current coin of of the world. If this negligence proceeds from inattention to general manners, or from total ignorance of the importance that is annexed to a proper mode of behaviour, the party is to be pitied; if, as it more frequently happens, it proceeds from a *supercilious* disdain of those trifles on which the world affixes a high value, much *censure* must be mixed with our regret. In either case a failure of success cannot fairly be attributed to the corrupt habits of the world. The world has long since de-

cided that a knowledge of the art of pleasing shall be a passport to its favour; and can it be wondered, that it refuses to receive a suppliant who does not come thus accredited? If we will adventure into a strange country without understanding its language or customs, we must expect a thousand perplexities and disappointments.

Why should merit expect that every one will take the trouble of piercing the rough shell in which it *wilfully* incrusts itself? why should it carelessly relinquish its inherent rights, and suffer fraud to reap advantages by borrowing the character that is naturally its own? A good man, who does not wish to appear amiable, has, in reality, so much sullenness and pride, as must considerably tarnish the lustre of his virtues. If it be his intention to pass his days in privacy, satisfied with the applause of

his own heart, and with the esteem of those who thoroughly know him, he cannot be taxed with inconsistency? and we can only condemn him for robbing virtue of its due consideration. But if it be his aim to attract attention, and to acquire reputation or fortune, he must not ascribe the miscarriage that is likely to ensue to the world's undiscerning partiality, but to his own inattention to those secondary qualities, which, though *least* in intrinsic value, are *first* seen by a common observer. People in general have not discernment, patience, or leisure enough to investigate deeply. A first impression generally strikes; and we decide upon it, that such a one is a disagreeable man. "He *has* great worth," observes another: "He may," is our careless retort, while our attention immediately turns to some more attractive object.

It has, indeed, often happened, that real merit, even when destitute of every external recommendation, has engaged the active friendship of powerful patrons: but this has rarely been the case, unless this same unpolished merit was gilded by the dazzling beam of genius. It is very flattering to self-love to have an opportunity of introducing "a gem of purest ray serene," or "a flower that has wasted its sweetness on the desert air," to the situation which it is well calculated to adorn. And the world seems to have come to a sort of tacit agreement to allow extraordinary abilities a licence to assume that *strangeness* of behaviour, under the soft phrase of originality, which it would reprobate as downright brutality in others. I can scarcely allow even genius this licence: at least, I would so circumscribe it as to refuse every pert man of wit, and every pedantic man of

logic, the permission of sheltering his rudeness under the excuse of absence and elevation of mind. The privilege of *disgusting* should be granted by patent, and never allowed to above half a dozen of contemporaries; by this means one might have a great chance to be *fortunate* enough never to meet with one of them.

I am not now speaking of negligences and inadvertences; for it is but fair to infer, from the vivacity and abstraction incident to great parts, or to a vigorous pursuit of any object, that inattention to minutiæ may at times occur, without partaking of the insolent superiority of *designed affront.* I think that the latter is not entitled to any excuse from the rank or talents of him who *gives it*, and that it can only be *justified* by the impertinence or worthlessness of him who *receives* it. When fools or knaves intrude into that rank of society, or that place in con-

versation, for which they are evidently unfit, we are obliged to the spirited champion of the laws of decorum, who either banishes them, or humbles them to their proper level. But a modest man of fair character, who is solicitous to avoid offending, is, by every law of social intercourse, protected from insult; and I must repeat, that neither rank nor talents are an excuse to the person who gives it. But, in truth, rank and talent rarely give occasion for such complaints. Persons possessed of these advantages have generally seen enough of the world to know, that insolence is incompatible with true dignity. The offence of which I am now speaking, ordinarily proceeds from two kinds of people, whom I cannot help reprobating as the *pests* of colloquial comfort. The first are those self-sufficient coxcombs who are always looking at *their own* excellencies; and the second

are the Joan Blunts, who are as *sedulously* attentive to *your* faults. The grand art of disgusting, which, notwithstanding our pretensions to refinement, has been much improved by modern practice, is deeply studied by these adepts; the former taking every opportunity of overwhelming you with their superiority; the latter watching you with the most assiduous attention, for no other purpose than to pester you with their advice. Each are, in fact, impostors; the coxcomb pretending to be very well-bred, and the friendly monitor to be very sincere; while, in reality, there is neither politeness nor sincerity in either of them. A wish to overpower and confound you is widely different from the wish of pleasing you. The former places you in a painful situation, the latter soothes and delights you. Nothing but the most distempered vanity could

unite these opposite qualities; and nothing but the most erroneous judgment could thus hope to carry admiration by storm. A coxcomb may confuse a man of superior understanding, may gain the laugh against him, and may (to run throug a string of very *genteel vulgarisms*) hoax, bore, quiz, and badger him. But, at the very instant of triumph, the ridiculed party is neither conscious of defeat, nor sensible of the superiority of his self-created conqueror. He has, indeed, been *silenced* by a torrent of words, and a few apish tricks; and so he might have been had his opponent been either a parrot or a monkey. But silence is not conviction: contempt has been mutually excited; with this difference, that what the coxcomb only affects on false premises, is in the plain man's bosom well-founded and sincere.

The humour of the times leans so strongly to the side of self-importance, effrontery, and negligence, now denominated spirit, proper assurance, and ease, that the race of overbearing coxcombs are multiplying to an infinite extent. But their cousins, the Joan Blunts, are, on the contrary, on the decline: or rather, instead of appearing in the shape in which they flourished half a century ago, continually giving you directions, and favouring you with the most obliging, because unsolicited, advice; they now seem to aim more at your opinions, abounding in petty contradictions, and unimportant arguments, in which either there is a difference without a disagreement, or the subject contended for is, in reality, so trivial and uninteresting, that the contest cannot arise from the love of truth, but must originate in the love of victory. It is

impossible to say how often the comfort of conversation has been sacrificed to these petty disturbances, and a social meeting, instead of promoting harmony and esteem, has terminated in jealousies and heart-burnings. Every one has returned home dissatisfied, and with a determination to prefer the *tedium* of their own fire-sides to the pain of *associating* under the influence of the Demon of contention.

I am not singular in affirming that, next to morals, manners is a subject highly worthy of your attention. The world at large; by which term, as I before observed, I do not mean the dissipated *few*, but the sober-minded *many*, has a right to determine the laws by which its commerce shall be guided; and though you may not be able at your present inexperienced age, to judge of the propriety of some of its decisions, yet rest

satisfied, that whatever has been adopted by general *consent* is sanctioned by general *expediency*. Established forms claim your concurrence; if not from that deference of opinion which generally becomes youth, at least from that regard to the means of promoting your future advantage, without which ambition is but a meteor light. In pressing you to give the laws of politeness "due honour and observance," I am not obliquely invalidating your regard for the precepts of morality; for it is my wish to imprint upon your mind, with the most indelible marks, this sacred truth, that the precepts of morality, as sanctioned by religion, are of *eternal pre-eminent* obligation, and paramount to all suggestions of temporal advantage. It must be our truest interest to preserve the favour of God, superior to all allurements of pleasure; for what sublunary

pleasures can be put in competition with a happy eternity?

Surely those, who represent pure morals and amiable manners as incompatible, must have very confused ideas of one or other of these qualities. I have spoken of the *amiableness* of christian goodness; let us now examine a little the *morality* of politeness.

It is urged by some austere censors, that the terms used in polite life have no specific meaning; and a very excellent satire on the consequences of literally interpreting them is given us in the letter from the Bantam ambassador, which you may remember in the Spectator. But neither the coarsely nor the affectedly vulgar have any right to cast a stone at polished manners for this offence; as it may be easily proved, that their own expressions are to the full as vague and indefinite, and as inade-

quate to the real meaning, which they in strictness wish to convey. The fact is, that, whenever any phrase gets sanctioned by general use, people understand it in a circumscribed manner. The speaker and the hearer have one idea of it, unless the latter is a stranger, and unused to local customs. I do not mean this as an apology for the *insincerity* of courtly *professions*; but I am sure that insincerity is the fault of *all* conversation, and that we as often meet with it in the *clown* as in the *courtier*. The duplicity of the lower ranks of society is flagrant and obvious; and I have often found it impossible to convince them that there is any guilt in a *premeditated* falsity. In the rank immediately above the poor, you may trace a strange tendency to exaggeration; not to that species of the romantic which, embellished by wit and fancy, is affected with a professed view

to entertain you, without the smallest design of imposing upon your belief; but long, dull, circumstantial stories of wonders, and the wonderful, as impossible as Autolicus's * tale of "the usurer's wife who longed for carbonadoed toads, or the fish who sung a ballad forty thousand fathom above water;" and like his stories too, "witnessed by five justices of the peace, and several honest wives who were present upon the occasion." While the evening is thus occupied by sacrificing truth on the shrine of dulness, is it possible to suppress an occasional *smile*, at the censures which are *incidentally* thrown in against insincerity? The most arrant deceiver in the roll of courtly promises does not violate truth more than these time-consuming gossips. The former only aims to

* See Winter's Tale.

impress you with an idea of his superior urbanity; the latter is equally solicitous that you should esteem him to be a very extraordinary person, who has been particularly favoured by wonderful adventures, and wonderful communications. If he is less successful in gaining your admiration, he must blame his own clumsy process, and not attack the more dexterous candidate, who has set off on the same principles with himself. I again repeat that I am not *vindicating* falsehood by stating its *universality*. I am persuaded, that a more guarded attention to plain fact, and more faithful delineation of our own minds in common conversation, is not only morally desirable, but would also prove extremely eligible on the score of expediency. I am convinced, however, that the lower order of people have no right to accuse their superiors of being most prone to duplicity. Even

the criminal habits of false honour produce a more guarded attention to truth, since an evident falsehood cannot be uttered without risk of personal danger. In this instance Satan appears to be divided against himself. May it predict the ruin of his kingdom!

And as false honour thus brandishes the sword over the head of positive untruths, the habits of speaking and thinking which are induced by a regular education guard against exaggeration; which, in general, is the fault of illiterate, rash, inconsiderate people, who fall into it, not so much from design, as from a want of precision in their ideas, and correctness in their expressions. I know not whether I am authorised to assign a better motive than fashion to the strict attention which is now paid to the education of children, who are early accustomed to investigate the powers of their

native language. Elegance in conversation implies not only versatility and copiousness, but perspicuity and appropriation; and no one can pretend to these qualities without guarding against the fault which I am reprobating. Besides, the distinguishing characteristic of high-bred circles is indifference; and the more they deviate into absurdity and vice, the more does this "sombrous power" compress them with her ebon wand. Where it is good breeding not to be surprised at any thing, nor to admire any thing, no one has any temptation to deal in the marvellous. Falsehood here takes the shape of apathy; and, by checking the emotions of the heart, reduces the passions to a morbid insensibility of those exquisite modifications of innocent enjoyment, from which unvitiated minds receive such pure de-

light, You are aware that I am now painting high life in its most odious colours, in the act of indulging affected fastidiousness to that extreme, that, finding no relish in pure and laudable pleasures, it seeks a refuge from *ennui* in guilt. Many writers of fiction of the democratic school, are fond of exhibiting this most degenerated state of manners; in which the mind, torpid to every useful purpose, is only active in the cause of vice. If these disgusting pictures of inverted reason are only drawn to deter others from imitating the hideous originals, the design is commendable, and the portrait may be so far just as to have many living originals; but if the representation is given as a true copy of the prevailing conduct of people of rank, I would protest not only against its inaccuracy, but against the

invidious design with which it is displayed. To annex, by a general censure, weakness of intellect, and depravity of conduct to those who move in a superior sphere of life, tends to excite the dangerous spirit of insubordination to *human* laws, and repining discontent at *divine* injunctions. But, happily, we may appeal to facts to disprove the invidious assertion of slanderous malignity and designing fiction. For if the head were thus depraved and stupified by sluggish inanity, could the body politic perform its functions with such vigour and promptitude? If sense and virtue were in reality so unfashionable, would they retain that hold in society which they actually do? We too well know how rapid every frippery absurdity, that the great have sanctioned by their practice, descends to the lower orders; many of whom, by ingeniously grafting them

on their native foibles, exemplify this line in Pope:

"All that disgrac'd my betters meets in me."

Hasty observations and shallow intellect catch at what is *outré*; and, perceiving that a superiority is affixed to the party who exhibits it, weakly suppose, that the distinction which is really due to some other part of the character, is attached to the foible which in reality derogates from its natural respectability. We have known this absurd spirit of imitation go so far as to the adoption of personal defects. The story of Alexander, and his wry-necked courtiers is in every one's mouth; and my own recollection furnishes me with an instance of the infirmity of an eminent character being generally copied, and it produced a most laughable effect. But would it be fair to infer that *all* people of fashion

"jig, amble, lisp, and nickname God's creatures," because a *few*, either through folly or misfortune, have fallen into such defects, which milliners and apprentices have taken up as "the mode?" Such imitation is the result of that ignorant propensity to ape their betters, which has lately taken such possession of the lower ranks of people: and in no instance does this vicious imitation more strongly operate than among those who, while they clamour most loudly against the vices and follies of the great, with the usual inconsistency that attends want of principle, are the first to practise what they are the first to condemn.

It is the character of true virtue never to court observation. She not only seeks privacy from her abhorrence of ostentation; but her actions, generally speaking, are of a retired private nature. The

gamester and the spendthrift act in the public eye. The crimes of the libertine, and the tyranny of the oppressor, are soon divulged, canvassed, and censured. The shame of the adultress is published to all the world; and the dissipated female, plunged in the vortex of vanity, courts discussion, and has her wish. But the patient wife, who meekly suffers the most cruel injuries, hides her wrongs from the world, and wishes, by a *sickly* smile, to *cheat* it into a belief that she is an *ordinary* character. The amiable mother who devotes her attention to the care of her rising family, and is engrossed by the interesting occupation, and happy in the conscientious discharge of her duty, has neither the wish nor the leisure to fly about the town, to condemn the conduct of Lady Rattle, whe is never at home. In like manner, the affectionate husband, the kind father,

the good master, the laborious student, the polished cultivator of elegant arts, is contented to limit his renown to the bosom of his family. *Extravagance* proclaims its profusion, and wishes to be thought a sad dog, or a careless creature; but *Charity* must not blow a trumpet when she distributes alms, lest she should lose her eternal reward. Blasphemy, Indelicacy, and Prophaneness, seek the public haunts of men, when they wish to exhibit the wretched *imposture* which they call Wit; but Piety shuts itself in its closet, and then pours out its soul to its Maker. Without having recourse to the general depravity of the great, or to that levelling humour which often, too often, induces us to attempt to degrade what is above us, do not the foregoing suggestions furnish a reason why we should oftener hear of the crimes and follies than we do of the good actions of

our superiors? especially if we consider that we are more apt to talk of what is singular and eccentric, than of what is natural and general.

I have adopted it as a maxim well worthy of attention, that people who are best informed are, generally, the most amiable and deserving. This, like every other rule, is liable to exceptions; but it has oftener set me right than misled me. Wherever I have met with ignorance, I have mostly found vice. But I must here define my idea of *culpable* ignorance; by which I would be understood to mean the want of that useful *necessary* knowledge, which your rank and station requires that you should possess. Can we wonder when a young nobleman, either neglected in his education, or improperly informed, early plunges into scenes of dissipation, and, before experience has supplied him with practical wisdom, listens to the suggestions of

flattery, knowing that fortune has given him the means of gratifying his lawless passions with unbounded indulgence? Must he not be more than man if he can resist such strong temptations? The humble walk of life in which *we* move furnishes numerous instances of youth, who, though educated in sober habits, accustomed to strict restraint and limited views, have yet dared immediate ruin, rather than confine their lawless appetites. These have no right to condemn their superiors for not obeying the precepts of conscience and religion, when they have themselves broken the bonds which in early youth are more restrictive. For, in defiance of temporal ruin, these latter have *sought out* and *solicited* temptation, bursting like lawless planets from their spheres, and subduing the force of prejudice, habitual controul, and custom, in order to be undone.

Far be it from me, my child, to vindicate the vices of the great. I only express what is both my belief and hope, that the *generality* are not vicious; and I lament the inverted ambition which prompts their imitators to adopt what is vile and contemptible in them, and to neglect what is amiable and praise-worthy. This is to winnow corn with a design of preserving the chaff, and to purify metals for the sake of the dross. If we must be all men and women of fashion, let us not, in the name of common sense, rest content with pantaloons and muslin drapery. Much less let us aim at imitating the gamester, the debauchee, or the demirep. My Lord may ride races, and swear, and my Lady may game and intrigue; but it is not gaming, swearing, racing, or intriguing, that has signed the patent which has constituted them Lords or Ladies. *Unhappily* for the world, their dignity is not *for-*

feited by their vices: but let Jemmy Jumps and Miss La Blonde practise these crimes with the greatest avidity, they must continue Miss La Blonde and Jemmy Jumps to the end of their existence.

The rage of being genteel is so universal, that I am not Drawcansir enough to attempt to check its progress. Let us then define welcome, and adopt it. We are told, that it means politeness, elegance in behaviour, civility, and gracefulness in mien. Let it by all means become "the universal passion." Let every rank pique itself upon acquiring it: Not, indeed, the particular modification which is better adapted to some other walk in life, but the general principle of suavity of manners, and agreeableness of address. We should then be no more wearied by the tedious details of self-importance; we should not

be offended by overbearing insolence, nor teazed by petty detraction. The snarl of *contradiction* would be softened into the gentle check of *diffident correction.* We should no longer esteem a man well-bred because he elbows himself into the president's chair; and we should provide a less equivocal proof of our politeness than the catalogue of our wardrobe.

We are grown excessively refined, and pique ourselves upon our superiority. Unquestionably we live more luxuriously, and dress more elegantly than our ancestors did. Our pleasures are of a more exquisite cast, and our language has adopted a more polished expression. But it is much to be doubted, whether manners have received equal improvement; at least, whether their improvements have descended to those orders who have rapidly subscribed to most of

the other alterations. We laugh at the plainness of our forefathers; but if we retain their vulgarity, and only drop their modesty, they might most justly laugh at us. It is a pity that frugality should be the only mark of a contracted mind which goes out of fashion; and that we should esteem it a mark of our liberality to found good breeding in selfishness, instead of benevolence.

I have so much to say, in praise of *real* politeness, and so much abuse to bestow on the *maukish* puppet, who would pass for her representative, that I must resume the subject in my next packet. In the mean time believe me to be, &c.

LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR SON,

IF we may define the term politeness to mean the desire of pleasing others, it appears so connected with our duty, and with the most amiable faculties of our minds, that it becomes an important and necessary acquisition, even in a religious or moral point of view. Considered as our passport to the esteem of the world, it is then eligible on principles of prudence; and if we view it as an appendage to the character of youth, it appears so graceful, that a young man scarcely seems to do himself justice who does not try to give himself this advantage.

The modification of this quality is, however, subject to the opinion of the world; which, though it cannot make what is in itself right wrong, or wrong right, has yet full force and power to vary what is in its nature arbitrary, and deducible from no other rule than opinion. The ruffs, hoops, and high-crowned hats of our ancestors, were not in themselves ridiculous or becoming. It would have been *right* to have adopted them during their day, and would be as absurd to resume them during the reign of dresses diametrically opposite. The grand end of clothing being answered, the adjustments, amplifications, or curtailments of our apparel, "are all trifles light as air," and what no one should pique themselves upon, either on account of singularity or conformity, invention or expence. Indeed, this last circumstance often dege-

nerates into a ruinous vice, the bane of family comfort, and the utter destruction of promising prospects. To imitate *prudent* people, of our own age, station, and fortune, is a safe rule; and a happy one too, as it shuts out a great deal of painful rivalry, which, contemptible as the object must appear to a reflecting mind, has often proved fatal to peace—to *female* peace at least. You will not, my dear son, suppose that I include dress in my definition of politeness, because my rambling pen has stumbled upon its genuine uses and blameable perversion. With many of our second-rate fashionables, however, it is not merely a part of good breeding, but the whole; "the Aaron's serpent which swallows up the rest." And I have so often known the description of a well-bred Lady commence with her cap, and terminate with the flounce

upon her petticoat, that it is not to be wondered at if my ideas are a little confused upon these subjects. I perfectly well recollect that period of my life when the paraphernalia of high fashion attracted my eyes, and rivetted my attention, till I thought the fair wearer the very model of grace and elegance. You must, therefore, excuse me if I take some time to consider, that these latter qualities are (like politeness itself) personal adjuncts, and that they cannot possibly be taken off, folded up, and put into a drawer, like an ornamental trimming. But to return.

I would entreat you to consider this quality of perpetual adherence to be "the one thing needful," which converts a *graceful* manner into a *solid* virtue. I have often acknowledged it to be a most engaging feature of real politeness, that no proud assumption of su-

periority depressed the feelings of conscious subordination, or painted diffidence, by an ostentatious display of the advantages of birth and fortune. I believe, that those who possess the former distinction are less apt to fall into the fault of distressing the inferiors whom they admit to their society by the *appearance* of overbearing consequence, than those who, by industry or good fortune, may have acquired a sudden influx of wealth. It seems as if pride in the bosom of the former, refined to a more "ethereal temper," from a consciousness of inherent supremacy, rests *defensively* upon its arms, and, like a generous mastiff, scorns to be roused by petty insults; while wealth, a snappish cur, conscious of its weakness, and apt so take alarm from the consideration of being every way vulnerable, like poor Lady Tremor in "Such Things Are," is always afraid

of having the paternal wig alluded to. I am rather inclined to suppose, that the difference which I have often had occasion strongly to remark, arises from my favourite maxim of the advantages of early cultivation; for I have observed, that wealth only made those purse-proud whose ideas were sordid and confined; whereas affluence, however unexpected or immense, failed to make any change in those whose minds had been corrected and enlarged by a judicious, valuable education, which is in fact an admirable preparative to insure propriety of behaviour under every change of fortune.

Your humble lot, my dear Thomas, may occasionally expose you to

——"the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes."

If you feel these indignities, treasure them in your memory, not to excite your splenetic resentment against those from whom they proceeded, for they may as often have been caused by *inadvertence,* as by a *design* to insult you; but by the smart of your own acute sensibilities on such occasions, and by the observance which you would think it just to require from others, regulate your own behaviour in every instance in which you are "lord of the ascendant." The opportunities of exercising such urbanity will not be unfrequent, if you recollect that every human being has a claim upon you for that species of charity which consists in courtesy; and, by accustoming yourself to practise it, you will acquire a habit which will diffuse an ineffable beauty over your whole deportment. From a complaisant manner of address, it will expand into a

general elegance of demeanour; and if you once lay it down as a rule, that all ranks have a claim upon you for courteous, civil treatment, manners will rise into morals; a grace will become a virtue; and you will practise it, not merely in the eye of the world, to attract the praise of men, but from principle, and in your most retired privacies.

The rule that I before gave you with respect to erroneous faith, or relaxed morals, extends equally to defects in manners. Hate what is arrogant and overbearing, so far as to avoid those faults yourself; but let christian charity teach you caution in affixing such opprobrious terms to the behaviour of others. It oftener happens, that the offence which we take at unpleasant treatment proceeds more from our own irritability and keen observation, than from the intentional rudeness of those from whom

we think that we have received it. If we can excuse any incivility by referring it to negligence, it is the wisest way so to do; because, if we suppose it to be designed, we are sure to feel the most acute pain, while those who distress us have either forgotten the circumstance, or are rejoicing at having the power of torturing us. If the person who has wounded our feelings be either a friend, or one whose esteem we are anxious to procure or preserve, and the circumstances of the offence will admit of it, I should recommend an early, cool, and respectful explanation. Many a sincere attachment hath pined away under the *withering* influence of suspicion, when mutual explicitness might have saved the most severe mutual heart ache, and have preserved to each party the essential advantage of reciprocal good offices. This is one of the many evils which

flow from false pride. We are all ready, in general terms, to acknowledge that we are weak, sinful creatures ; and yet few have the greatness of soul to be willing to confess any particular instance of error. Yet surely concession, considered as the property of such a being as man, may be said to rank among his virtues.

If you find your susceptibility grow querulous, restrain it, as you value your future peace. We should never dignify fretfulness by the name of feeling ; for nothing can be more opposite. The former is always occupied about itself, and is the most disagreeable branch of the hateful family of selfishness. The latter is the secret stimulant which inclines us to take a benevolent interest in the wants of others. Fretfulness is never excusable, but in those whose spirits are depressed by a long series of sufferings

and sorrows. In them we ought not only to pardon it, as the pitiable weakness of old age or calamity, but youth and happiness ought to use its endeavours to divert the chagrin which such situations generally excite. Instead of which, we often see the young lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the complaints of her gouty grandfather in the morning, torment every inmate of the family by her *waspishness*, if disappointed in her expectation of going to some favourite amusement in the evening.

Your sex are particularly severe upon women who fall into this fault; and, with a degree of harsh judgment, which I long to call partial, they suppose that no degree of provocation in a man can justify petulance in his domestic partner. I do not pretend to excuse the weakness of my sex; I own that we are many

degrees distant from angels; and therefore the *superior* nature, who claims pre-eminence over us, is doubly bound not to lead his *weak charge* into temptation. Besides, our duller apprehensions can more easily comprehend example than precept; and if you lords of the creation would never be morose and irrascible, we volatile beings might soon forget how to pout and frown. I feel a wayward inclination to enlarge upon this subject; and, as the disputatious humour is strong upon me, I might proceed to say, that, like secondary planets, we merely reflect the *warm* radiance of the primary orb on which we are dependants. But I will avoid what would be useless to you in your *present* situation, and will only desire you to remember in *future*, that wives, sisters, and daughters, are included in

the list of *human beings*, and therefore have a claim to courtesy.

We have agreed that general civility is essential to politeness, and have determined fretfulness to be as inimical to its nature as it is to the repose of the bosom in which it is harboured. Now let us look a little at the prevailing fashion of ease or rather inattention. The politeness of the last age had a good deal of officiousness in it. I am told, that people often knocked one another down in running to shut the door, and that in handing plates charged with the principal delicacy round the table, the most lamentable misadventures frequently happened to Nankin china and brocade petticoats. While we smile at the perplexed ideas which could confound being very troublesome with being very agreeable, and congratulate the polished freedom

which a juster cast of thinking has introduced into our present manners, let us take care that our *freedom* continues to be *polished.* For, of the two extremes, it is better to be laughed at for a little overdoing in the way of civility, than incur censure for insolent negligence. The familiar nod, which young people have generally adopted, is certainly in itself awkward and ungraceful, and in point of application highly indecorous to any but their very intimate juvenile acquaintance. It is like another custom, of calling their elders and superiors by their common names, without any appellation of respect; and they may both be considered as striking features of that wide-extended evil of insubordination, which now requires the hand of every watchful guardian of our country's safety to check its course. Perhaps these habits are merely adopted with a design

of shewing fashionable breeding; and the best way to prevent them would be by constantly representing them as what they unquestionably are, the result of no breeding at all. People of polished manners never sanction these customs, unless in the case of social *intimacy*. The rules of etiquette, by which the great world is guided, prescribe marked attention to superiors, and the condescension to inferiors which must enter into the composition of real politeness, precludes any style of behaviour that is calculated to infuse a painful sense of humiliation. A well-bred person treats you with attention, if not from tenderness to your feelings, from respect to his own character. I have so often heard what was meant for *ease* and *freedom* determined by excellent judges of men and manners, to be *sheer impudence*, that I should tremble at the apprehension of

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your incurring this censure. The character of a civil, modest, sensible young man, is so infinitely superior to this second-rate ease, this bronze counterfeit, which would pass for real gentility, that it seems very injudicious to violate the feelings natural to the uncorrupted mind in order to be ridiculous—I might have said odious. You may gain the plaudit of the weak and ignorant, and with it the contempt of the wise and well-informed.

The true gentleman, indeed, *appears* to be the easiest of all characters. But the graceful freedom which is in him so natural, is extremely difficult to be acquired. Whoever does any thing very well, *seems* to do it without trouble: but this is a deception on our senses, which cannot pass if we consider that much previous pains, great labour, study, and application, must precede apparent fa-

cility of execution. What is necessary in mechanical performances, is equally so in the pleasing acquisition of personal grace. A rare and uncommon genius sometimes arises, endowed with sufficient natural talents to deviate from the common track, and to hurry to the goal, aided by intuitive powers. In like manner a few are born gentlemen; grace and agreeableness attend them from their childhood, and the frame of their mind and body are so happily constituted, that benevolent feelings ever find a pleasing vehicle in which they may disclose themselves to admiring observers. But, generally speaking, great attention to early habit; close observation of good models; frequent intercourse with improving society; good sense, with its constant attendants, deference and reflection, are necessary to form the exterior of the gentleman. To which, if we would

complete the character, we must add a good temper, and good principles. He will otherwise be capricious and inconsistent; courtly with one, and tyrannical with another; a compound of selfishness, meanness, and hypocrisy; a time-serving sycophant, but not a gentleman.

It is impossible for you to be in company with a person possessed of true politeness, without feeling yourself soothed and gratified. The attentions which you receive put you in good-humour with all around you; and, by observing that even-handed propriety has dealt the same distinctions to others, you do not indulge the silly vanity of ascribing those attentions to your own desert, but to the complaisance of the person who bestows them. What you admire, endeavour to imitate: I do not mean the looks, words, or actions

by which this engaging faculty was communicated; for you will then be either a mere machine or a mimic. I wish you to remark the result of the whole. Imprint the *effect* upon your mind, and nature will dictate the correspondent signs with propriety.

Our best authors have acknowledged, that no character is so difficult to invent and support as that of a gentleman. It is, beside, subject to some variations. Sir Charles Grandison is drawn at full length, and I suppose in the *costûme* of his time. His morals are so excellent, that I know of no work of fiction which I would more strongly recommend to the *study* of a young man. But the nature of morals is unchangeable; and what was just and wise in the day of Solomon is so still. Manners allowably vary; and, in spite of my admiration of Sir Charles, I would not advise you to adopt

his habit of making fine speeches, or to enter upon those long declamations which would now be deemed unreasonably tiresome. Young Bevil, in Steele's comedy of the Conscious Lovers, is a true gentleman, and a character extremely well worthy the consideration of those who found their title to politeness on brutal *disrespect* to their parents, and *insolence* or *inconsideration* to their friends. Lovelace was not meant to exhibit the real gentleman, but a fair exterior covering a satanic disposition. Tom Jones was designed for a libertine; he is an every-day common character; and the merit of the novel to which he gives name does not rest on the excellence of its hero. Goldsmith had no design of a drawing a gentleman in his Vicar of Wakefield; his characters are too much marked with eccentricity. Sir William is a worthy humourist, and Mr. Thorn-

hill is, what dedauchees generally are, vulgar and foolish. Succeeding writers seem to be more anxious to sketch ardent lovers than complete gentlemen. I do not recollect any *very happy* attempt at this latter character in any recent novel or comedy, unless it be Lord Orville in "Evelina." The taste of the age now resembles the forced appetite of declining health; every thing must be very high-seasoned and pungent. The vapid attention of most of the readers of this class of writings cannot be excited by the charms of propriety, elegance, and undeviating rectitude, Nature must either be caricatured by affectation, or distorted by passion. We are told, indeed, in the prospectus, that the hero is a complete gentleman; but we rarely meet with any other proof of it than this assurance.

To return from this digression. Though it is exceedingly difficult to tell you how to make a gentleman, it is easy to inform you how to unmake him; and the surest way of doing so is, by awkward partial imitation. If your stars should at any time afford you a glimpse of a good model, I would have you contemplate it with the most *guarded* attention. To know the *minutiæ* of a gentleman's behaviour, is valuable knowledge if well applied; but do not imitate his manner, unless your perceive that it is so congenial to your own that it will appear to be the natural growth of your own character, not an ingrafted scion. I know some who esteem themselves to be very well-bred people, because they use on all occasion a *cant phrase*; which, having *once* heard from the lips of a person of fashion, they suppose contains the mysterious potency

of a magic charm, transforming all who utter it into the very models of gentility. During the period that fine clothes constituted good-breeding, I have known the stripe or the cut of a waistcoat metamorphose the wearer into such an *insufferable* gentleman, that, for the sake of the comfort of the company, I have wished him buttoned up in one of his grandfather's leather doublets. The manner of twirling a cane, or lolling in a chair, has produced the same imaginary transformation; and you know that a noble author has had the sagacity to make the manner of eating a tart the credential of a man of fashion. But, though the gentleman will appear in trifles as frivolous as what I have been recounting, they do not *form* the *constituent* part of his character.

When the gentleman has adjusted his dress by the precepts of a good taste,

and by a wish to avoid singularity, he is desirous to conceal the pains that he has taken with his external appearance; or rather, his attention is immediately devoted to more generous and manly views: while the fop, after having caricatured his person, incessantly labours to convince you that he is an Adonis. But I am now introducing a nonentity, an obsolete character, too much out of fashion to endanger imitation. It is more necessary to warn you against the "sloven," who, with the "independent fellow," and the "careless dog," are acquisitions in the line of gentlemen for which we are *unquestionably* indebted to modern improvers. To repeat their titles, is to condemn them; to imitate them, is to resign all sense of decorum, all inbred ideas of decency and propriety; to found a claim to gentility

upon such pretensions, is to be deplorably ignorant of life and manners.

Another consideration on manner, which, though absolutely necessary to render it commendable, is generally disregarded, arises from its being appropriate, suitable, and decorous. As the attendant circumstances determine the value of our actions, misapplication must make what is in itself praiseworthy, ridiculous or culpable. In manners, as in morals, general rules may be laid down; but good sense must apply them to local use. Unless the faculty of judgment exists in the mind that receives instruction, the labours of the preceptor are ineffectual; for liberality borders so near upon profusion, that while the tutor wishes to inculcate the virtue, the injudicious pupil may think that he is recommending the vice. The greatest

adept in politeness in the preceding age, laboured hard to form a courtier, and produced a puppy; and, indeed, what better could be expected from an artificial mechanical system, which put the body in trammels, and neglected the heart; which glossed and polished the exterior, and left the mind rough, uninformed, and unstable? It is to good sense acting *naturally* upon good principle, that we are to look for estimable conduct and agreeable deportment.

As I recommend to you that desire of pleasing, which is the effect of benevolence, I must also entreat you to bound it by prudence, which is the surest guard against puppyism, by teaching you to avoid every species of affectation. With respect to personal distortions, though they are very disgusting and ridiculous, I am more inclined to pity than to cen-

sure those who have acquired them. They are generally assumed as graces, while the judgment is immature; and it afterwards becomes difficult if not impossible to avoid them. It is so easy to acquire unpleasant habits, and people are such bad judges of their own, that the checks of a judicious friend are highly valuable, especially at that period of life when our manner is to be formed. Let me here again caution you against close imitation: it is, in fact, mimicry, and almost always produces the same effect. The *assumed* grace must be thoroughly interwoven with the *texture* of the character, or it will appear like a *patch* instead of an *ornament*.

Suitability includes another requisite; namely, that you should not be more of a gentleman than accords with your rank and fortune. The levelling principle,

which is now so industriously disseminated, counteracts this precaution; and you will hear a vast deal of abuse upon dull care, low minded prudence, and drudging industry. You will be told, that they are in their very nature infinitely inferior to liberality, generosity, taste, spirit, independence, vivacity, fire, and a great many other clever fellows, who I am apt to suspect are Bow Street runners in disguise; for I know that they generally conduct their associates to the same fatal goal.

If you desire it, I will grant that it is a pity, that a lad of great parts, numerous acquirements, fine feelings, and as many *et ceteras* as you please, was not born a nobleman. I confess I see no reason why you were not, except the will of Providence, the laws of your country, and the absolute necessity that

the humbler stations in life should be more thickly peopled than the exalted. And as many thousand young men possessed of these pretensions are in your predicament, I know of no remedies but industry and resignation. For if you were all to dash in a high style, the universe could not hold you. There must be a profusion of aromatic flowers, to support the bees who live upon their sweets; and, what is more, the *bees* themselves are not *butterflies*. They also have a province assigned them, and *they* must *labour* in their vocation or perish. Had you been born in a higher sphere, your duties would have been multiplied, or you would have been a worthless drone. If you find the care of a few talents difficult, do not murmur at your Lord for not having entrusted you with more. I am treating the subject more

seriously than I intended; but it proceeds from my earnest wish to see you contented in your situation, and performing its duties with cheerfulness; and, surely, respect to the wise appointments of your Creator is the strongest motive to induce you so to do. If you do not seem to despise your own lot in life, by affecting an *unsuitable* degree of importance, you will not give others a pretext to deride it. There is nothing contemptible in decent virtuous poverty; it is too sacred to be ridiculed; unless, by a poor imitation of what you cannot support, you give others leave to suppose that you are ashamed of it. Have you any cause to blush at saying, "I cannot afford such an indulgence," unless you are conscious of using those expressions with a view of extorting the desired pleasure from the liberality of those whom you address? The purse-proud

worldling and the empty-headed coxcomb may despise you: and if *contempt* for any individual were a Christian sentiment, you might retort it; but solace yourself with reflecting that the friendship of those who act on such *narrow* principles cannot be desirable.

I am not advising you to trumpet your wants to the world; that were to lose all virtuous dignity of character, and to assume the air of a mendicant. I wish you to *confine* your wants within the *bounds* of your fortunes; and never to be ashamed of owning that you dare not allow yourself even an innocent gratification which you can ill afford. By exercising a habit of prudent self-denial, you will strengthen all your virtues; and the forbidden fruit, when it has been long avoided, will cease to be attractive. Besides the considerations which are due to fortune, some are justly owing

to rank; for, even allowing wealth to be equal, it is evident that the gradations of society have a certain propriety of expence allotted to each order, which it is at least injudicious to outstep. I do not mean that the *degree* of expence should be prescribed and limited by sumptuary laws; I only mean, that it is prudent in every rank of society so to conduct themselves, as not to excite the ridicule or the envy of the degrees which are immediately above or below them. This opinion will draw on me the bitterest invectives from all the immense hordes of spirited young men, who, like Lenitive, secretly "curse the shop," and whenever they go out of it, banish it from their minds, and, if *possible*, from their manners. Nor am I less afraid that the lady of the house, their *ci-devant* mistress, will be equally indignant, when

she has lighted up her lustres and chandeliers, strung her wreaths of artificial flowers, fixed her card tables, prepared her lemonade, nay, even engaged the *circular* groom of the chamber, who is master of the ceremonies in that neighbourhood, for the grand event of her "being at home;" should I, in my blunt way, assure her, that I should consider her more in character when presiding at the *social* comforts of a friendly tea-table, or a family party. I almost doubt, whether the master of the mansion, notwithstanding the impending horrors of an appearance in the Gazette, would thank me for animadverting upon his tavern bill of fare; and I will own that his list of wines, and the furniture of his country villa, might tempt me to say something more just than agreeable, unless I should restrain myself by a recollection of the next

subject which I propose to discuss. I will dismiss this with an earnest entreaty, that, from the consideration of its not having been your own fault that you are not rich and great, you will never fall into the puerile vanity of wishing to be thought so. You must immediately be found out, and then you will deserve the ridicule which cannot now fasten upon your character. Adopt the manners of the gentleman, as far as civility, attention, propriety of expression, modest ease, and decent frankness, indicate the gentleman. But stop there; to *imitate* his expences is ruinous; to *affect* to do so is contemptible.

There is a fault which intrudes into all classes of society, and by the expulsion of which conversation would be infinitely improved: I mean, ill nature; an error that we are all *apt* to fall into;

and yet it is an offence which we all *keenly* feel. The great offices of mutual assistance, comfort, advice, and support, which man requires from his brother man, demand virtues of an active and enterprising, I know not whether I should be right in adding, of a *superior* cast. But good humour is the current coin of life; an easy comfortable quality, which we may familiarize by hourly practice; a seed of spontaneous growth, which quickly produces its hundred-fold return. Though there are many vices more diabolical than ill-nature, yet it is against this, as against Cain, that every man's hand is more particularly lifted: and no wonder; for it takes us by surprise, at the moment when we are least upon our guard. When weary with business, harassed by disappointments, or worn with care, we seek to repose on the bosom of complacence,

this teazing wasp disturbs and stings us. It pursues us to our convivial haunts, where we assemble to please and to be pleased. It not only breaks this fundamental law of social intercourse, but introduces the most painful, instead of agreeable sensations, and sends every person away comfortless and dissatisfied. One ill-tempered individual frequently has it in his power to interrupt the happiness of a whole party; yet to do so, is to exercise such a cruel spirit of tyranny, that it seems extraordinary that we should ever find ill-temper except in unison with the most *hateful* qualities: and yet, so great is the inconsistency of human nature, and so prevalent the force of habit, that we often find a sour splenetic humour vitiate the manners of the generous and the good. I am inclined to hope that this mostly

proceeds from inconsideration; for can goodness delight to give pain? Can generosity be indifferent to the distress which it causes? Indeed, you may generally trace the spring whence this unpalatable cup is derived. If from constitutional hastiness, peevishness, bad habit, inattention, or any source short of *malevolence*, no sooner do you *express* the feelings of pain than the behaviour of the offending party *changes*, and he appears *hurt* at his own conduct, and anxious to remove its ill effects. But the moment of your depression and extreme uneasiness is that which malevolence chooses, not only for triumph, but for a renewed attack. Her scorpions have tasted blood, and they become more furious. You will then have a lecture on ill-humour delivered by ill-humour, descanting on its own

effects: like the sagacious pedagogue, who whipped his boys till they cried, and then whipped them for crying.

I need not say much to induce you to dislike a mode of conduct which all the world is agreed to reprobate as odious and detestable, and which leaves to the wretched being who practises it only one poor enjoyment, and that is, the pleasure of tormenting. There are various forms in which this leaven of forwardness contrives to corrupt the peace of society. Hauteur of demeanour, arrogance of expression, stormy contention, overwhelming dogmatism, irritable captiousness, petulance, calumniation, every thing that is invidious or derogatory, is an offence against the rules of social intercourse; and let me add, what I trust will have more weight with you, a breach of the great law of charity, whose influence is admirably

designed to extend to all the minutiæ of manner, as well as to the important duties of forgiving injuries and relieving distress.

Sheer malevolence is a vice of deep die, and cannot admit of palliation: I hope, for the honour of humanity, that it is not often to be met with. But with respect to those lighter shades of ill-humour, which are too common, I would again observe, that it is the most *improvident* of all our frailties, since it is sure to excite every one's dislike. Not from malice, but from a principle of self-defence, or from a generous interest in the wrongs of others, every one is inclined "to shoot out their arrows, even bitter words," against those "who are froward and perverse in the land." It sometimes happens, that this inclination is over-ruled by the restraints which interested deference will impose, in case the person

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who indulges in these unhappy propensities enjoys those local advantages of rank, power, wealth, or influence of which others wish to avail themselves. But though ill-humour is thus secured from contradiction, its situation is to the full as unenviable; for it is nothing better than that of an eastern despot, confined within the walls of his own palace, and surrounded by mutes and parasites. And if it will not observe the rules which society imposes, how can it expect to be other than an alien and an outcast from the rest of mankind? Virtue rarely rises to such superlative height, as entirely to sacrifice its own comfort where duty does not require such self-immolation. *Agreeable* talents will seek the spot where they may be *agreeably* exercised. The pain of contention, and the harass of petulance, are too oppressive to be voluntarily endured. Nothing

but interest, or commiseration, can induce people to relinquish their comforts to promote the *satisfaction* of those who will not be *satisfied*. And, let the Bashaw of his own fire-side pique himself, if he can, upon those assiduities which are extorted either by the fear of his power or the desire of his property, or else are the offering of pity to his forlorn condition. Sometimes, indeed, the good qualities which petulance has not quite subdued may mingle with this latter sentiment, respect and esteem; but how unwise is that asperity which represses the generous feelings of *affection!*

I have already admitted, that there are extenuations to be pleaded in favour of sickness, age, and sorrow. Calamity of every kind has a sacred claim upon our good offices; and we must not excuse our indifference to a suffering

fellow-creature, because their patience proves unequal to the conflict which they have to sustain: much less may we aggravate their poignant feelings by our neglect or severity. I should call that person base, ungenerous; nay, I should doubt his right to the name of Christian, who did not feel his resentment subside the moment his adversary felt distress— if in that situation he could insult him. But let us leave the *condemnation* of such uncharitableness to the God who *forbids* it. Let me entreat you not to apply any of the observations which I have just made on petulance, to that sort of wayward peevishness which is excited by misfortune. The depressed mind sees every thing through a dark medium. It is not always envious at another's prosperity, but it always *feels* its own privations. Indeed, fretfulness is often so intimately connected with bodily pain,

as to be deemed a symptom of disease. Let not health and prosperity enter the house of woe, to *show* its own advantages, but to relieve the *gloom* of the mournful mansion. They who can insult misfortune, by displaying the flutter of affluence, or by goading the bosom of the sufferer with *taunting advice*, will some time or other bitterly feel how sacred are the claims of affliction. Remember those claims, as you would wish your own to be remembered; and let not an unwillingness to spend an uncomfortable hour induce you to pass the doors of those to whom your company might give a transient relief. Bear with their complaints, as you would wish others to bear with yours. Excuse their frailties, as you hope and expect your own offences to be forgiven.

Even that species of ill-humour which, instead of being able to excuse itself by

the plea of affliction, rather seems to want some severe trial to rouse it from the fastidiousness and self-indulgence of prosperity, may urge a just apology for its excesses, if it is wantonly *provoked.* I know many people who excessively enjoy the idea of *teasing* a person whom they choose to call ill-tempered, yet who, in fact, is far less guilty of that fault than themselves, though he may have some peculiarity which, when attacked, sets all his angry passions in a blaze. I will allow, that it is very imprudent to expose, or even to preserve an odd corner in our character: but I must tell those busy-bodies, who deem themselves justifying in rubbing it smooth, that ill-nature is not a *passive* but an *active* quality; that it consists in *tormenting* others; and that, if they are the aggressors, the charge retorts upon themselves, and the plea of wit and hu-

mour will not exculpate them. Indeed, there is generally more of hatred or malice than either of the above qualities in this species of attack: and, instead of entertaining the company, it often alarms them, unless they are composed of that description of people who could enjoy the diversion of a bear-baiting. This sort of warfare is never allowable, unless designed to *parry* a blow which has been *first* aimed at some of the *party*. For the company then assembled may be termed a court that can only take cognizance of offences committed under its immediate jurisdiction; and whoever comes into it with a determination to *retaliate* the provocations which they have *formerly* received from any of the persons of whom it is composed, is guilty of an offence against the supremacy of the court, and punishable by statute. As I am convinced

that tempers are sooner injured than improved by irritation, I never will admit that the reputation of ill-humour justifies any one in *commencing* hostilities. While this quality lies *dormant*, we have no more business to rouse it than to awaken a sleeping lion; for, though we may defend ourselves with great address, yet our temerity disturbs the spectators, and we are justly exposed both to danger and ridicule for provoking an *unnecessary* contest.

Even good-temper itself, though so generally approved, has almost as many definitions as admirers. Among the populace, it in strictness means a pot of porter; for the person who gives them that cup of nepenthe, becomes instantly very good-natured. I have known good-nature consist in a black face, and wearing a wig the wrong side before. A person, who talks till all the company

are deaf, is most *inconceivably* good-natured; and a young lady seldom receives a ticket for the Opera, but from "the dearest, best-tempered creature in the world." With many who are above the rank of the vulgar, good-nature appears in the shape of an *excellent* dinner, and a *good* choice of wines. Whoever ruins himself through extravagance, is good-natured; but your best tempered people of all, are those who are contented to *live* upon other persons, and, provided their own wants are supplied, have too much *sweetness* to care how, and too much *gentleness* to mind whether it is by the deprivation of others or not. I am so partial to mirth and vivacity, that I can readily pardon its innocent extravagances; but I must not allow myself to give to it a title which belongs to a much nobler quality; and I am afraid, my dear Thomas, that a

little cool investigation must deprive good-humour of many more of these pseudo votaries; for, if selfishness may be permitted to determine on which side the character preponderates, ill-nature may take one half of them, and folly the other. Be not terrified into an excess, which discretion or virtue disapproves, by the apprehended censure of being termed a cross fellow. Good-humour may sometimes be indiscreet; but that is a blemish in her character, not an advantage; and as often as she falls into that error, she admits in her bosom an inmate that must in time destroy her placid graces; I mean remorse.

I believe you have read an elegant poem, by an eminent poet, in which temper is made to triumph over disappointment, detraction, and insolence. Temper has many other enemies: and, though I extremely disapprove of the

conduct of those who sport with her feelings, she must practise forbearance or forfeit her crown. There is one peculiar expression of this graceful virtue which is eminently becoming to us all; and that is, concession. We generally fall into error through inadvertency, but we continue in it through obstinacy: the former is the fault of our *nature*, the latter of *ourselves*. " To err is human;" this we all confess, though few seem willing to own that acknowledging a fault indicates greatness of mind. Yet surely this conduct proves, that a person possesses some valuable qualities which he is loth to put to the hazard of being eclipsed by one blemish; and therefore he hastens to obliterate the effects of his fault. We are so liable to mistake and misconception, that to own that we have acted under the influence of those qualities, is merely to say that we are human

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creatures. To pretend to be exempt from an influence which our fellow-mortals hourly feel, betrays that species of pride which is in reality folly. It is peculiarly improper in young persons, who, from the want of that secondary wisdom, experience, must, without the least imputation of *natural* defect *oftener* be mistaken, than people who have been more practised in the way of life. As concession, therefore, is a most graceful quality at your age; so, for the same reason, confidence is disgusting. I do not mean confidence in your own capability, for I would wish a young man to feel as if his own exertions, when *properly* guided, would be equal to every enterprise; but I mean confidence in your own opinions. The former species of confidence stimulates industry, quickens application, and encourages that generous spirit of independence, which

makes him active and diligent in promoting his own interests, instead of throwing himself a listless weight upon the support of his friends. The latter makes him disgusting in company; and is so far from indicating an enterprising mind, that it is generally associated with indolence: for that hateful quality is founded upon some fancied superiority, which, in the possessor's opinion, exempts him from the *universal obligation* of usefulness. Wits and geniuses (I do not mean of the true Attic race, but of that prolific brood who are more numerous than men of business) would be degraded by the ignominious servility of employment; and the ray of ethereal fire, which makes them so much above the *ordinary* drudges by whom they are surrounded, gives them a claim to enjoy the privileges that are eminently due to superior utility.—Yet, as those only have a

right to take the lead whose services are most beneficial to the community, so modesty and docility are the usual attendants on true talents.

A contradictious overbearing humour is *disagreeable* in advanced life; but in youth it is *insupportable*. The utmost excuse that candour can make for it is, that it may proceed from the exuberance of youthful spirits. I would readily pardon it on that ground, as I would every other *boyish* absurdity; but though it is an enormity which grows more into practice every year, I cannot say that I think the rising generation is more lively than that was which has within my memory stepped into manhood. I remember when youths of fifteen were very impatient to have the dinner ceremony conclude, that they might run away to cricket, or some other athletic amusement. I now see them regularly cut-in for the rubber,

take their glass in rotation, and, instead of diffidently answering those who address them, become the *voice* of the company, the *self-created* judges who decide upon dress, literature, politics, and religion. They are generally the only description of gentlemen who pay any attention to the ladies; through gratitude, I hope; for the ladies are very generally inclined to act the part of Mrs. Dangleclub, by bringing Master Marmozet *out*, and shewing him to advantage. I am one of those "who think the boys would be better at school," than thus permaturely exhibiting themselves in a character which they cannot sustain; for I am confident, that whatever is gained in early knowledge of the world, is lost by forfeiting the grace and delicacy of youthful diffidence.

I have said much in favour of deference, humility, and respect to supe-

riors; and, lest you should overstrain my meaning, let me observe, that deference is not servility; humility is not meanness; nor is respect flattery. A very ordinary understanding may readily distinguish between the modest man and the sycophant. You will not deserve the latter epithet, by showing *occasional* respect to a person of deprived character. For the *station* of the man may demand that observance which, as an individual, his faults have forfeited. The common occurrences of the world may throw us into contact with a villain, whose vices we detest. But we are not authorised to set up for reformers of others. Reproof from our lips would be powerless; and we have no right to let our secret abhorrence speak in our frowns, nor to "bid disdain and scorn ride sparkling in our eyes." We must leave the offender to the judgment of his

God; all our business is, neither to *encourage* his crimes, nor to *imitate* his conduct. I am not apologising for *intimacies* between vice and virtue; nothing can be more incongruous, nor more hazardous. I am speaking of a *casual intercourse*, which you cannot avoid, and in which, whatever be the character of the person with whom you have any dealings, you are bound to observe the laws of decorum. But I trust, that the feelings of virtuous indignation, though suppressed by prudential considerations, will be too strong to suffer you in the smallest degree to extenuate vice, much less to pamper its depraved appetites with perverted praise. The youth who has blasted his own fortunes, by idleness or extravagance may turn parasite. Nobler views are opened for the industrious and deserving. He who is overbearing, dictatorial, and insolent in one

circle, often acts the part of a "time-serving knave" in another.

I shall not be guilty of any contradiction if I talk of manly modesty. It was a quality of which our ancestors were very fond, and which still ranks high in the opinion of the best and wisest of our contemporaries. It may be defined by the old aphorism, and termed the art of "respecting ourselves." We cannot be said to do this when we plunge into vice, or when we abandon ourselves to folly. Pride, like every other passion, is capable of becoming an useful auxiliary in the cause of virtue. I speak of it according to one of the definitions which our great philologist has given of it, "elevation, dignity, and generous elation of heart;" and in this sense it is not inapplicable to beings who are made capable of inheriting immortality. If

in mean inordinate self-esteem, it is absurd; if insolent disdain of others, it is brutal. Against these two descriptions of pride I would earnestly warn you; the other I would wish you to cherish. The civil government of the state, the laws of custom, and the natural consequences of local situation, have made a difference between you and your fellow-creatures, which, though artificial, must be observed in every case that does not violate a higher law. Whenever the awful obligations of *conscience* interfere, human institutions yield to a superior judicature. You own no respect, no obedience, no deference, to a brother mortal who asks from you undue services. Your nature is the same as his, your soul is as valuable, and your hopes of a better country as firm and well-founded. Cast your anchor on the Rock of ages: and doubt not that you will

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ride secure amidst the temporary conflict of warring elements.

There is one circumstance that I have only cursorily mentioned, but which deserves a little more consideration. I have said, that we should not set up for reformers; and, indeed, it is a most hazardous and dangerous attempt. I do not mean by this, that you should suppress the generous indignation at atrocious guilt which is so natural to an unvitiated mind; but you should not give way to a habit of *indiscriminate censure*, and you should carefully avoid all *petty detraction.* Do not be fond of dictating to others. Reproof is one of the sacred offices of friendship; and, if well performed, it is one of the most advantageous. But it requires delicacy, address, judgment, and, above all, tenderness and *privacy.* When these circumstances accompany good advice,

it must be the fault of the advised if he does not reap the most beneficial consequences from the salutary counsel; when they are wanting, it may be doubtful whether we sought to gratify our vanity or our spleen by our censures; but it is most probable, that friendliness was not our motive.

There is a style of reproof that is very powerful, which subjects us to no imputation of superciliousness, and which often checks that eager pursuit of folly or vice which argument might inflame: I mean an expressive silence, and the marked *regular opposition* of wise meritorious conduct. Continue thus to declaim by action against all evil-doers, and they will soon learn to wear at least the *externals* of decency in your company. And though, with respect to my own character, I should think hypocrisy as detestable as guilt; yet, since it is less

offensive than open profaneness, manners would gain something by the alteration.

I have not warned you against those low degrading vices which sometimes attract the impetuous passions of youth. You know your obligations to avoid them; and, young as you are, you must have often seen the miseries to which they *inevitably* lead. There are also many virtues on which I have not expatiated, because I know that you are well acquainted with the great outline of your duty. My motive for selecting those on which I have enlarged has proceeded from observing, that many erroneous notions on those points have been circulated with avidity; and that much faulty practice has arisen from mistaken ideas on subjects extremely essential to the welfare of the rising generation, whom I sincerely wish to be both *respectable*

and *happy*. But this consummation never can ensue from their adopting habits that are inimical to the station which they hold in society.

I have long since discovered in your mind a very useful and valuable quality, which will prove your best preservative against the contagion of bad example, and the poison of bad principles; I mean *common sense*. Providence has marked its importance to the welfare of mankind by the *liberality* with which it has been distributed; while *genius*, like all the rarer gifts of heaven, has been administered with a *sparing* hand, as an exquisite cordial of sovereign efficacy, but likely to be misapplied. Without genius, very little improvement could have been made in the world; without common sense no improvement could be permanent. As invention is the characteristic of the former faculty, persever-

ance is a striking feature in the latter. Genius is generally too volatile and rapid to be accurate in its decisions. Investigation is admirably suited to the talents of common sense. Under the conduct of good principles, genius is a blessing of the first importance; without it, it becomes a curse to the possessor, and to every one within its influence. If common sense cannot hope to rise to such proud pre-eminence, its errors are less glaring; and, indeed, it seldomer falls into mistake; for general opinion is so partial to genius, that an allowance is always made for its *eccentricities;* whereas common sense has only plain *propriety* to depend upon. I have heard it called a drone, a drudge, and several other degrading epithets. Were I to indulge myself in an allusion, I would call genius "the high-mettled racer," or the "bit of blood," which, though capable

of vast exertions, requires great care, and is continually out of condition; while common sense is the family hackney, that works harder, fares worse, and is always well and serviceable.

But, though the Promethean ray of genius is always stolen from Jove, there is a will-o'-the-wisp substitute which dazzles and glitters in its *small* horizon, and thinks itself possessed of a *pretty brilliancy*. Parental partiality often gives birth to this deceitful vapour, which generally ends in a quagmire. To drop the figurative style, many a poor lad, who might have looked respectable behind a counter, is induced, by Mamma's indulgence, and Papa's admiration, to set up for a wit; and of course, being too great a personage for humble avocations, has become a burden upon that society which his services might have benefited. What a strange idea that any one

should suppose himself exempted from the duties of life because he has a more enlarged ability of fulfilling them! The power of real genius is generally exemplified in raising itself from an inferior station to consideration and opulence; not by indolence, but by activity; not by supposing itself privileged to do *nothing*, but by applying its versatile powers to *every thing*.

In the present state of society, every one feels himself sufficiently interested by his own affairs; and it properly requires, that all those who are to be the founders of their own fortunes should, in a great degree, depend upon their own diligence. I trust that you will persevere in exercising so commendable a quality. It is not only the surest guide to competence, but the safest defence against those temptations which are most apt to seduce the youthful mind.

But human nature requires some degree of leisure and relaxation ; the employment of that leisure, and the choice of that relaxation, are points of infinite importance. Your friends are select and valuable. A numerous acquaintance is generally an inconvenience, often a misfortune. Public diversions must be very sparingly frequented ; for their expence is ill-suited to your limited fortune ; and an excess in those pleasures would certainly seduce your mind from attention to your business, and might eventually injure your moral and religious feelings. Though I do not condemn them as in their nature criminal, I must observe that they are liable to two species of abuse. First, if the representation is in itself immoral ; and secondly, if a taste for them is indulged at the expence of any positive duties. You may *pervert* them by suffering

them to lead you into extravagance, or by allowing them to occupy your thoughts when they ought to be devoted to important concerns. This latter consideration is binding upon all, what ever their rank, wealth, or situation may be. The *amusements* of life must never become its *employments*. Extreme rigidness in abstaining from them *may* form an illiberal, morose, unpleasant character; unbounded gratification *must* constitute a dissolute, selfish, unstable one. In this, as in every other point, moderation is the end that we should aim at; and, to determine that moderation with respect to the danger of excess, I know of no better rule than to preserve perfect self-possession. When the love of pleasure has power to unhinge our minds, and to draw us into what we feel to be

blameable, it is plainly become our master, and self-denial must subdue the tyrant.

I have already recommended history, as one of the best, and most improving species of reading in which you can employ your leisure hours. But no sort of real knowledge, for which you feel an inclination, will be unsuitable ; and in matters that depend upon taste, I would wish you to decide for yourself. Only let me entreat you to have recourse to those productions which have received the stamp of general approbation, and this will be more valuable, if it has been *long* awarded. There is such a thing as fashion in reading ; and very inferior compositions have owed a short-lived celebrity to its decisions. But the plaudits of caprice and whim cannot be permanent, and the many who

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join in reiterating the praises which some very genteel people of their acquaintance have bestowed, will soon seek some new idol, whom they will worship with as sincere and as transient an adoration; for this sort of reputation never stands the test of time; it answers the *pecuniary* end of the publisher, and that is thought sufficient. Your little leisure will be too valuable to be thrown away; and, though all your acquaintance may be busy in *talking* of something *new*, let me hope that you will be employed in *studying* something *old*. I do not mean to insinuate, that there is nothing valuable in the works of our contemporaries; but I doubt the maturity of your judgment to make a proper selection; and I have not sufficient respect for the decisions of fashion to imagine that you will find it to be an able director.

Greater dangers than that of losing your time may arise from an insatiable eagerness after new publications. We will consider what those dangers are in a few more Letters, which will terminate the plan that I prescribed to myself for the present correspondence. Believe me, with ever good wish, &c.

LETTER XIV.

MY DEAR SON,

THOUGH your active mode of life will leave you too little leisure to allow you to acquire a studious habit, yet that little, well husbanded, will assist you in the cultivation of literary taste; which you will find to be a most useful and pleasant companion in your journey through life; especially at that period when the animal spirits begin to flag, when bodily exertion wearies the languid frame, and when the mind, if unaccustomed to the pleasures of reflection, must either be absorbed by *ennui* and peevishness, or depend for entertainment on the bounty of others; like

honest Dogberry, "most willingly bestowing all its tediousness" on those who will protect it from its worst enemy, self.

Though prudence should teach youth to lay up a competent stock of both intellectual and pecuniary wealth, for the increased wants and imbecilities of age, the advantages of literary cultivation are not *confined* to that *distant* period. A well-informed person possesses an indisputable passport into good company, in the just and sensible estimation of that phrase. To him, solitude is so far from being an inconvenience, that he never is more occupied than when alone; and he looks forward to the quiet enjoyment of a disengaged evening with the same eager anticipation as a fine lady does to a rout "so charmingly crowded that there is no

danger of its being voted *comfortable.*"

Nor is this generous independence, this safe retreat from licentious pleasure, this enviable self-enjoyment, the only advantage that may be derived from a pursuit of knowledge. Elegant and useful information, while it forms the manners and improves the understanding, is the best mean, next to religious principle, to correct the heart, to restrain impetuous passions, to subdue irregularities of temper, to prevent singularity either in our ideas or address, and, in fine, to make us good and estimable, as well as entertaining and agreeable. A person of an enlarged mind sees through a purer medium than his ignorant neighbour. He is not liable to such gross mistakes, nor can he be so soon deceived by the misrepresentations of others. He is less agitated by ex-

traordinary events, and is thus less subject to the caprices of fortune. In adversity he discovers resources; and a recollection of the strange vicissitudes that have happened to others, supplies a confidence which is most likely to resist despair. In prosperity, he possesses his soul in tranquillity; for a knowledge of the true use and fluctuating nature of wealth, serves as ballast to keep his vessel steady; while the *light vacant* mind, tossed about by every varying inclination, is continually veering towards some new absurdity, and exciting ridicule and contempt, from a foolish display of that consequence by which it is so elated in its own estimation, and so degraded in that of others. In a word, this is one of the definitions of the phrase in which I wish you to be "quite the gentleman;" for there is no situation of life in which a person appears out

of character from being well informed.

You must not ask whether the good consequences which I have described always proceed from the cultivation of the mind; for you know that there is in human nature a corrupt evil propensity, which continually counteracts beneficial impulses. We acknowledge this to be the case with respect to Christianity; and if that holy law has not eradicated *sin*, human knowledge cannot be expected to banish *error*. We must not, in either case, slight an estimable mean because its consequences are not complete. The *best* principles are most likely to produce the *best* actions; the *best* information will probably occasion the most *prudent* conduct.

One reason for the censures which the bad behaviour of some people of good education has brought on the cul-

tivation of the mind proceeds from the want of clearly discerning what a good education means. If it is so entirely confined to the aim of becoming a good linguist, that in ascertaining the derivation of words, the nature of things is wholly neglected, I will own that I do not see how the understanding, the temper, or the heart, can derive any advantage from an accumulation of mere *verbal* knowledge. Far be it from me to countenance the tenets of the new school, or to found wisdom on any other basis than the firm durable support of sound learning. We can only know what is taught in any language by being ourselves thoroughly versed in the language in which such information is contained. If we trust to the information of others, our intelligence is gained at second hand. This is certainly enough for all the purposes of common life; but then we never

must pretend to be *adepts*, nor must we attach any weight to our own unsupported assertions, which entirely depend on the authority of those to whom we appeal. It is the common error of ignorance to depreciate the advantages that it does not enjoy. I have too often felt the disadvantages that are annexed to a limited education, to boast of that as an excellence which I lament as a misfortune. By railing at mere pedants, the cause of learning is not injured; unless you term *those* pedants who are in fact too profoundly wise for your capacity to comprehend; by doing which you only expose your own folly, and incur the ridicule which you meant to bestow.

There is another species of good education, or, as it is more generally termed, of being well informed; which, though less generally censured, is apt to lead to consequences far worse than what is

called logical lumber: I mean a species of reading which engenders a vicious enfeebling sensibility, and a proud, or, I should rather say, a conceited self-confidence, which stores the imagination with false images and bewildering ideas, but leaves the mind uninformed, and the heart uncorrected.

These bad effects, which are produced by reading only works of fiction, used to be chiefly confined to my sex; but, of late, a very genteel set of male students, wrapped in their dressing-gowns, by lolling on a sofa in red morocco slippers, with that formidable weapon against *ennui*, a modern novel, in their hands, contrive to kill that monster, Time. These *dear creatures* hate idleness, and are exceedingly well-informed: so pray say nothing against lounging and ignorance. They are great adepts in verbal sensibility; but

their hearts are to well guarded by apathy to be in any danger of breaking; and we will leave them to their *soft* sorrows. My present attention is directed to a higher order of beings, for whose failings I feel the strong sympathy which correspondent sufferings excite. I speak of those who, in the language of Warton, may complain of the Muse,

> "Who fill'd the soft ingenuous mind
> With many a feeling too refin'd,
> And rous'd to livelier pangs the wakeful sense
> of woe."

To such I would recommend the *experienced* comfort of religion, that grand corrective of human sorrow, as described in the same fine poem:—

> ——"The same power that wisely sends
> Life's fiercest ills, indulgent lends
> Religion's golden shield to break th'embattl'd
> foe."

This shield is indeed the only *invulnerable* defence that real susceptibility can oppose to neglect and misfortune. So bright is its radiance, that it may serve for a mirror too, and not only *defend* us from our enemies, but also *reflect* our own true likeness. It will teach us to know whether the sorrow that makes us bleed at every pore be real or imaginary; a certain unavoidable infliction of Providence, coming immediately from our Heavenly Father, or a scourge which our own folly has *helped* to form. It will shew us, too, whether we have more cause to complain of the neglect of the world or of our own *extravagant* expectations; whether our friends have been ungrateful, deceitful, and inattentive, or whether our hopes of success rested on the *insecure* ground of self-supposed desert. Thus, to change the metaphor, religion will not only

prove a cordial, but a corrective: a cure for present ills, and a preservative from apprehended dangers.

I am now speaking of religion as applied to the heart; but let us bestow a little attention on *religious knowledge*, and we shall find, that no other style of information is so likely to obviate the evils which are incident to excessive irritable sensibility. By occupying the mind with the most grand and awful subjects, we shall avoid that anxious attention to trifles which is so likely to overwhelm it with petty cares. I am not here speaking of that affected delicacy and fastidiousness which is merely seated in the imagination, but that which deeply interests and penetrates the heart. I may also observe, that the simple energetic beauties of the scripture narratives would greatly conduce to amend a disordered judgment, and to correct a vi-

tiated taste. You may find in them all the chaste beauties of composition; and you may derive lessons of "moral prudence," admirably adpated to the most useful purposes of *common* life, from the records of *unquestionable* truth.

You have a grave serious turn of thinking; and some years ago your habits indicated a tendency to constitutional melancholy, which I am persuaded would have gained ground had you continued in a retired situation, under the watchful, anxious, anticipating care of parental tenderness. It was happy for us all, that we had resolution enough to send you from us, into those active bustling scenes where necessity requires and example stimulates to exertion. Engaging in a constant series of employments is the surest method of "combating the foul fiend." To prevent these salutary

effects from being *counteracted* in your retirements, I would advise you to devote your literary hours to the perusal either of such works as communicate solid information, or of such as abound in the playfulness of *innocent* humour. Those authors who powerfully excite strong feelings are *unsafe* reading for you; but there is no danger if their attempts, by being badly executed, deviate into extravagance: when that is the case I will own that they afford me an amusement which I much enjoy. I recollect having derived a great deal of this sort of entertainment from the Sorrows of Werter. I detested its immoral, I might say its impious tendency; and the story was too ill-contrived to interest me. As for the sentiments, they generally flowed in the true style of pathos; and I will leave you to judge of the incidents, when I

tell you, that one of the letters conveys the important information, that Werter is gathering pears and Charlotte standing under the tree picking them up. But let me give you a little abstract of the story. Werter, in great dejection for the loss of some lady, (whether sister, wife, or mistress, never transpires,) arrives at a romantic retirement, and, seeing Charlotte in the act of *cutting bread and butter* for her brothers and sisters, he falls in love with her. She is then betrothed, and afterwards actually married to Albert; but that for a *long time* seems to signify nothing to Werter. He takes no step to prevent the marriage, nor does he appear more mad after it has taken place than he was before. His attachment is much too refined to resemble that of any other person, and he spends a whole night on his knees before a nosegay that had been

given him by Charlotte. The lady sees Werter's attachment, and does not repress it, Werter knows her engagements, yet determines to indulge it; and Albert continues to be a peaceable good creature, who is supposed to let every thing happen as it will. All these characters are people of the *greatest virtue*. At last Albert grows a little angry, and then Werter resolves to kill himself; and, as he takes this step to make Charlotte *happy*, he contrives to receive the instruments of death from her hands, unconscious of the use for which he designed them; and, by his distracted behaviour in a preceding interview, he impresses her mind with the most *agonising* horror and remorse. In short, that the work may preserve all due *consistency*, as it opened with Werter's grieving for Eleanora's sister, it closes, as all the printshops tell you, with Char-

lotte's weeping over his tomb. I read it many years ago, and I may have misstated some particulars; but I can swear to the *captivating* slices of bread and butter, and to the *adoration* of the nosegay. Such is this admired composition, written to recommend an extravagant criminal attachment, and to justify suicide!

There is another work by the same Author, but of the dramatic kind, which is said to be extremely *popular* in his own country, though, notwithstanding the *remarkable* pains taken to introduce it, by early and repeated translations, it has not been thoroughly naturalized here. Indeed, as one of our reviews admitted, the plot "is rather *too strong* for the English taste." A Gentleman lives alternately with two Ladies, and seems doubtful which he perfers. They possess a vast deal of

sentiment, and a vast deal of *virtue*; though certainly Cecilia, the wife, is "but a square-elbowed family drudge," as Mrs. Wolstonecraft would say, compared with Stella, the mistress; and I agree with that author, in terming Cecilia's "a very cattish sort of affection." But, though far inferior in spirit and sentiment, I must ascribe to her the most *virtue*. For, seeing that a Werter scene was likely to take place, she proposes to the frantic Ferdinand, that he, "the angel," and herself, should all live together, in social philanthropy and tender friendship; and after a chorus of oh's and ah's the curtain drops. I think that this "charming composition," as one of its translators terms it, would have the same affect upon you, as the "the lamentable tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe" had upon Philostrate in the

Midsummer-night's Dream; which he says, he must confess,

"Made his eyes water, but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed."

Though from prudential reasons, arising from your own peculiar frame of mind, I would advise you to deal very sparingly with the true pathetic. I own that the dangers which are to be apprehended from over-exquisite feelings are light and trivial, compared with what may arise from the perusal of those books which endeavour to inflame the grosser appetites and irregular passions. Even the more minute descriptions of virtuous love cannot be perused with perfect safety, if the describer has not painted them from the representations of a chaste hallowed imagination. Be ever careful of applying the highly-wrought visionary

resemblance of "perfect, fair, and good," to the Dulcinea of your own creation; nor expect that the complete happiness or the complete virtue which you will find in the enchanting narrative had ever any other foundation than in the imagination of the author. The ladies, trust me, are neither saints nor angels; they are not the objects of adoration, but of tenderness and esteem. We ask not your homage, but your protection; we are your friends, your helpmates, and your companions, not your idols. The man who, setting out with an extravagant idea of our superhuman excellence, first adddresses us in the character of a "kneeling slave," soon, as Thomson observes, becomes "a Tyrant." But again I am betrayed into an anachronism, by my predilection for the manners that are "quite out," and, in spite of the assurances which I have received that the

"*age of chivalry is over,*" I am cautioning a beau of the nineteenth century against the danger of entertaining an extravagant admiration of the fair sex. But indeed, Thomas, I am not so ignorant as to know, that a broad stare, a supercilious toss, every grimace that can indicate apathy or contempt, and every inattention that marks self-admiration, are the methods by which the Narcissusses of the day win the *flexible* hearts of our gentle nymphs; who, like fair Echo, glide by the side of their *insensible* paramours, longing to *repeat* a *tender tale*; but being, like their unhappy prototype, to unable to begin, are either doomed to eternal silence, or to *repeat* the *vapid gratulations* of *egotism*. I think that mania of both parties might be cured, by shutting the gentleman up in solitary imprisonment, bereft not only of his cook, valet, tailor, boot-maker, and opera

glass, but also of those auxiliaries, his dogs and horses. Once a week, the enamoured belle should visit him, and present him with a volume of Amadis de Gaul, or some similar composition; and I doubt not that if a few visits did not awaken *his* gratitude, they would completely cure *her* attachment; for, solitude and reflection are dreadful enemies to the infatuation of a self-inamorato; and vanity and sameness must be wretched *tête-à-tête* companions. The lady's attachment had probably no firmer foundation, than her having discovered, in the course of her reading, that every beauty falls in love; and she therefore fitted her ready-made passion to the favoured individual, not from any principle of selection, but because he came most in her way, was an *immense pretty fellow*, and *cared for nobody*. So great have been the revolutions of a few

years, that our Werters, instead of kneeling to Charlotte's nosegay, will not touch their hats to Charlotte herself when the smiling goddess passes them *in propriâ personâ.* Take care that I do not detect you in this fault, or expect me to send you Sir Amadis by the first opportunity.

But to return from my digression. I shall not enter upon the subject of indelicate writings; to name them is to condemn them; and whenever genius stoops to touch *contamination*, the tendency of the book degrades the writer, but the powers of the writer cannot dignify the book. Though Sterne may claim our commendation for humour and pathos, there are parts of his works that must fix an eternal stigma on his character as a Christian clergyman. To speak my own sentiments, I think that his writings have been too much extolled, and I

hope that they are rapidly hastening to their merited disesteem. Except the story of Le Fevre, most of his episodes are exceptionable. That of Maria, I do not clearly understand; and he seems to have rendered it obscure by aiming at great simplicity. He is praised for his attention to nature. I think the whimsical analogy which he supposes, between his own face and that of the goat, never could have occurred to the imagination of a benevolent man while placed by the side of an amiable interesting maniac, as he then supposes himself to be. To me this comparison smells of the lamp, and seems suggested by his determination of supporting the character of a humourist. I have lately read his letters to Eliza, and hope that they are supposititious; for they appear to be very mean, considered as compositions; and with regard to their morality, they express that most dangerous and crimi-

nal of all passions, a violent attachment to a married woman. His apologists may say that it was purely Platonic; but if that sort of affection ever was really felt, for one who has observed its restraints, numbers have transgressed its bounds; and the guilty many will either affect to be exculpated by the continence of the virtuous few, or they will excuse their crimes by pleading that their intentions were at first equally innocent, and that they were unawares surprised into guilt. If they are sincere penitents, they must join me in execrating the absurd idea, that a violent passion between the opposite sexes can safely exist, if *insuperable* laws restrain either of the parties from the *possibility* of a legal union. No married woman of delicacy will permit any man, except her husband, to address her in more animated terms than those of respect and esteem. No man of principle will *pre-*

sume to express more ardent sentiments, or indeed suffer his heart to entertain them. Our language has no execration strong enough to reprobate the dreadful tendency of those publications which, by persuading you that it is not in your power to subdue your guilty passions, transfer your crimes to your Creator, and make your *nature* culpable for the effects of your own *misrule.* No precepts deserve to be more powerfully enforcêd, than those by which our Saviour sought to guard the first emotions and impulses of our hearts. If we correct them we are safe ; and to correct them is always in our power. If we indulge them, they may acquire an impetuosity which we cannot resist, and thus in time they gain a complete ascendancy over us. But the reins were in our own hands, and it is our loose discipline that has enabled them to be rebels. That they are

disposed to be so, is the natural consequence of our frail, imperfect nature; and the correcting vigilance which we are required to exercise indicates the warfare and conflict that are inseparable from a preparatory state. But if our guilty passions must of necessity gain the ascendant, we should not be men, but demons. I *repeat* these reflections, because I wish to imprint them deeply on your mind; and they lead me to the peculiar and distinguishing feature of what is termed the new philosophy, and which consists not merely in encouraging vice, but in terming it virtue.

I have been told, that the licentious writers who disgraced England during the immoral reign of King Charles the Second, indulged a gross indelicacy of thought and expression which is now *almost* unknown; but I do not, for that *sole*

reason, think that they were more pernicious than our present theorists. I should deem them less so to a well-disposed mind, because such poison carries with it its antidote, since it always excites a strong and immediate disgust in a virtuous bosom; whereas, unless the judgment be very sound, and the memory amply stored with well-digested information, the bold assertions and delusive representations of the new school will so perplex a reader who is inexperienced in the wiles of controversy, that he will begin to doubt whether it is right and expedient for him to correct his passions, or whether he should indulge their most extravagant excesses, under the idea that they are the sure guides to virtue; whether he owes any obligations to society, and to the close connections of nature, or whether he is a free independent being, self-impelled, self-governed, and insulated from all around him;

whether our happiness is to be derived from doing what we ought, or from doing what we please? In short, without *immediately* attempting to inflame the sinful appetites and corrupt inclinations, the curb which should restrain their subsequent excesses is entirely broken; and we are *urged* by principle to those very excesses which from principle we were accustomed to *reprobate*.

A new theory of morals is invented, corresponding with this leading idea, that "whatever is *naturally* found in man is *morally* right." Speculating upon this notion, the promulgators of this doctrine take care to prove, that all the corrupt propensities which originate from this perverted habit of thinking are natural. By indulging these desires, they think they shall attain to the perfection of their nature; and, as any precept which tends to restrain them must be wrong, all human laws that secure

property are wrong also ; and inequality of condition is with them the *cause*, not the *effect*, of human corruption. They hold, that our nature exists in its utmost purity among savages, and that civilization and social intercourse are curses. Conformably to these ideas, subjection is servility, and authority tyranny ; while liberty and independence are such indefeasible rights, that even between a parent and child, no such sentiments as authority and obedience should subsist. They say, that the miseries of mankind do not proceed from divine sufferance, from general depravity, or from the fulfilment of the mysterious plans of Providence ; but from the perverse oppression of the great, who *delight* in the miseries of their fellow-creatures. They affirm, that all difficulties are *naturally* surmountable by man : and that disease, and even death itself, may, in time, be found

to be conquerable by human wisdom and precaution. Chastity, with them, means only individuality of affection: while preference subsists, they say, it cannot be violated; and, this preference being allowed to be transferable, they grant to chastity all the latitude which the grossest incontinence could desire. They suppose cases, which either never could exist, or which are highly improbable, whereby, from the the pressure of contrary duties, an action in itself highly immoral becomes heroic and excellent; and thus the old doctrine of the church of Rome is revived; and we are instructed to do *evil* that *good* may come of it. A multiplicity of fictions are fabricated upon *these principles*, which are even avowed in the titles of the works. Allured by the charm of antithesis, our young readers sit down to the perusal of "The Pitiable Adultress,"

"The Noble Lie," "Generous Revenge," "Honest Thieves," "The Guiltless Parricide," "Error of Virtue," "Amiable Indiscretions," "The Innocent Slanderer," "Delicate Anger," and a thousand other absurdities. They also hold, that minds of a superior cast are a perfect law to themselves, and should ot submit to the illiberality of definite restrictions. These are some of the tenets in morals: in religion they are nearly similar; for they affirm, that Christians have taken the character of their God from that of a tyrant who lays snares for his creatures, and who delights in cruelty and adulation. Whoever believes that one creature was created with vicious inclinations, they say, makes the Creator a demon. Benevolence is the only attribute which they seem willing to allow their Deity: and they evidently make him all good, that they may transgress

with impunity. Some even doubt whether God is any thing more than nature; and most of them use these words indiscriminately. All assert that religious worship is a chimera, and prayer, (you will shudder at their definition) a selfish blasphemous absurdity, presupposing the *unwillingness* of the Almighty to relieve our wants, and founded on an illiberal wish of *supplanting* our fellow-creatures. The few who believe in a world to come will not allow their expectations of it to be modified by an idea of future rewards and punishments; for they hold, that the only necessity for our existing after death is, to complete the knowledge which is now imperfect, and to gratify the desires which have not been satiated. Of course, all modes of faith are alike unimportant, and a virtuous heart is all that the Deity requires of us. You will refer to their moral

system to know their definition of virtue; and of course inquire what the vice is which may not shelter itself under that name. Indeed, with their notions of the Almighty, and of a future state, it seems extraordinary that the term virtue should be retained. They are, however, fond of it; from which it appears probable, that their designs in using it are to attract the unwary, to form a sort of rallying point, and to have always a convenient *watch-word*, to oppose to tyranny, oppression, bigotry, prescriptive right, priestcraft, and, in a word, every thing that is contrary to the most licentious and ungovernable insubordination.

These dreadful principles, so repugnant to truth, to experience, and to the general welfare of mankind, have been for these last twenty years circulated with an avidity and systematic arrange-

ment which plainly indicated a deep, well-digested plan; a formed, compacted regular *conspiracy*; not the desultory disjointed motions of unconnected individuals. This idea struck many people who observed the amazing degree of intrepidity, coolness, and adroitness, with which this warfare against our noblest principles and best hopes was carried on, *maugré* all the resistance which it met with. For no sooner was it pressed in one shape, than it burst forth in another; if one assertion was *silenced*, for being too bold, the same tenets were again supported in more *qualified* terms. It has since been *proved* by the publications of the Abbè Barruel, that a conspiracy against Christianity, regular governments, and all social institutions, actually *exists*; and that it was first formed by Voltaire, Diderot, and D'Alembert, who, with a degree of in-

dustry and success as astonishing as the diabolical malevolence which dictated their design, disseminated their opinions in an insidious *secret* manner over France and Germany; infecting courts and colleges, cities and villages, princes, statesmen, professors, tradesmen, artizans, and peasants, with their dreadful doctrines. They disseminated their opinions in all shapes, from the massy volumes of the French Encyclopædia, to the catch-penny sheet that is hawked through the obscure village. They gave them every form; sometimes assailing sacred truths with audacious ridicule; sometimes circulating such an *invidious* defence of religion and morality, as craftily *weakened* the principles which it intended to support; now wearing the *dignified* air of a system of natural history, and now assuming the *flimsy* garb of a romance: sometimes

reviling and execrating, sometimes misrepresenting and blaspheming the most sacred subjects. *In short*, by every possible means which preverted talent, and restless malignity could devise, these impious conspirators carried on their deady warfare; not against superstition, but against Christianity; not against a corrupted priesthood, but against their Redeemer and their God; by attempting to *eradicate* from the human breast the *fundamental* principles of piety and virtue.

Notwithstanding the apparent absurdity of such a plan, its success in the two countries which were the principle scenes of action has been awfully indisputable; and its contaminating influence has been but too visible in many other parts of the Continent. To the efforts of this widely-extended plot, the French revolution, and all its

attendant horrors, may be most justly ascribed; nor can all the efforts and sophistry of those who in this kingdom *covertly* favour, or at least *plausibly* excuse, the attempts of this infidel association, suggest any other cause, which could be sufficiently efficacious to occasion, and to continue, such an universal change in the ideas, conduct, and manners of that *tremendously* distinguished nation. A publication of considerable celebrity for the wit and ability with which it is conducted, but more than *suspected* of *leaning* to the principles which I have reprobated, after attempting to deduce the French revolution from the universal dissatisfaction of all ranks of people to the existing system of government, was at length compelled to acknowledge, "That the geneaıl alienation from royalty was increased by that universal disbelief in revealed

religion which has been disseminated by the writings of infidels." And then, with apparent reluctance, interspersed with contemptuous smiles at the credulity and strange combinations of the Abbè Barruel, they make a concession, which is so important that I must transcribe it: "In the opinion of many, the Abbè will be thought in some instances to have indulged his imagination too much, and to have been hasty in his conclusions; but, *after every deduction is made on this account, more than sufficient, both of his fact and argument, will remain, to establish his assertion of the existence of an antichristian conspiracy.* If every other proof of this were wanting, the Letters of Voltaire, published since his decease, places it beyond controversy. That correspondence has disclosed to the world the important secret,

that an alliance between bigotry and infidelity may exist; that the same bosom may entertain the seemingly incompatible principles of fanaticism and unbelief; that Deism and Atheism have their zealots, as well as superstition; and that, in the ardour of propagating opinions, the modern philosophers of France are not inferior to the missionaries of the Vatican, or the disciples of Calvin and Luther." I desire no *clearer* exposition of the inconsistencies of this false philosophy, and I think you can discern the reason why its supporters are associated with the disciples of Calvin and Luther. Unfortunately, a portion of this *inconsistency* adheres to the very work from which I have made this extract. In a subsequent number, they condemn another volume of Barruel's Discoveries, saying, that he brings forward

each part with decreasing evidence; they, however, acknowledge, "that he *incontestibly and satisfactorily proved* the conspiracy of the philosophers against the altar." Yet, in another article of that very number, they extol Condorcet, who was a principal conspirator, "as one of the most distinguished personages whom this age has produced; whose eminent talents, science, eloquence, and philanthropy, have given a *lasting* impulse to the fortunes of the human race." Lest you should excuse this panegyric, from an idea that their admiration of his eminence as a natural philosopher had produced a *momentary forgetfulness* of his diabolically-active infidelity, in an extract from his life, which is the work that they are reviewing, they tell us that "his biographer owns he pushed matters too far, in his attempts

to overthrow Christianity; for, admitting the *justness of his system*, it was more prudent to confine within the circle of the initiated, those truths which are dangerous to the multitude; who cannot replace, by sound principles, what they would lose of fear, of consolation, and of hope."

Can you, my dear Child, believe, that these reviewers could feel very indignant at a conspiracy which had for its avowed aim to undo all that Christ and his apostles had done; when their *encomium* on one of its chief agents is not *limited* by one little particle, intimating their *regret* that he had been active in so nefarious an undertaking? Could they *honestly* bestow on him this unqualified praise the moment after they had perused the account of his life and writings? a life, terminated by suicide; and by which, as France has with blood de-

plored, a most tremendous, but I will hope not a "*lasting* impulse has been given to the fortunes of the human race;" writings, which even the licentious temerity of his atheistical encomiast owned were too rash and hypothetical. Surely this mode of reviewing partakes of the spirit of the French Encyclopædiasts; who, in one part of their work, treated religious subjects with guarded deference and respect, in order that it might obtain admission into the libraries of well-intentioned people; and that their designs might be better secured from detection, every article that had a *direct obvious* reference to these topics was put into the hands of orthodox writers. But, as we learn from the correspondence of Voltaire, care was taken to undo all that they did, in those *obscure* parts which had only a *remote* analogy to faith and morals.

Many reasons concur, to induce us to receive the decisions of our literary censors with caution instead of confidence. The principles which are *professed* in the preface and the prospectus are often but a covert for the principles that are *really* entertained. What those are, can only be discovered by the most *watchful perservering* attention; and by that sort of examination of the publications reviewed, which few *young* people would have the opportunity or the patience to undertake. The poison so delicately prepared, and so cautiously administered, sinks unperceived into the soul; and its effects can only be counteracted by the powerful antidotes of solid information and good principles, early instilled into the mind, and strengthened by a sound discriminating judgment. When you are thoroughly sensible of the beauty of truth, you will not be seduced

by falsehood. When your opinions are founded upon premises that you *clearly* understand, you will neither be captivated by a flowing style, nor overawed by a bold assertion. You will weigh and compare; you will examine how their whole system hangs together; you will scrutinize the fabric which they wish to erect, and, not hastily adopting an incongruous design, of which you are only shown a small part very trimly executed, you will be sensible that it is easy to censure and to pluck down, but very difficult to *construct*, a noble edifice.

I do not mean to be invidious or particular in my remarks; but when we are possessed of *incontrovertible proof*, I mean the testimony of Voltaire and his associates, that reviews, magazines, and other productions of a similar nature, were some of the most successful means by which the tenets of Jacobinism,

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both with respect to government and religion were propagated in France; it is not being an alarmist to enquire whether those engines, which recent experience has proved to be so powerfully destructive in a neighbouring kingdom, are directed to better purposes here. Many of our miscellanies are *avowedly hostile* to our civil and religious establishments. In *some* I have seen such assertions, under the pretext of zeal for *free discussion*, as I should have thought too *impious* to be tolerated in a Christian country. Others are more cautious, and *affect* to treat with decorum and respect what their *consciences cannot approve*. Among these, you must not look for a bold attack, but a sly insinuation. All here is gentleness, liberality, candour, moderation, impartiality, great regard for truth, and universal philanthropy. They will give you a specimen of the

first quality, by speaking of very immoral, nay, even indelicate writers, in exceedingly complaisant and well-bred terms; admiring their wit and talents, and kindly *lamenting* their scurrility. They bestow their liberality also on this portion of writers, who, they candidly *hope*, will rub off the little specks which obscure their brightness in the next publication; and thus, like Puff in the Critic, they make their well-turned censure the parent of a new edition. I could exemplify their moderation and impartiality by observing, that the most *plausible* works on the side of schism and republicanism, I will not *quite* say infidelity and anarchy, are selected and suffered to *amplify* their doctrines through successive numbers; and if some fiery champion of the establishment should rush forth with more zeal than prudence, and lift up his *leaden* mace against the

demon of misrule, he also is unfortnately dragged to the *fore-ground*, and *bastinaded* with the most *rigid impartiality:* while, to shew their moderation, any excellent valuable work of the same tendency is confined to the humble limit of half a page; and what cannot be ridiculed is "damned with faint praise." Their regard to truth rests upon their own assertions. Certainly they must best know what they *feel:* were we to judge of it by what they *say*, we might be tempted to call it *problematical.* I give full credit to their *universal* philanthropy; for, after long observation, I never did see any instance of its being counteracted by the *narrow spirit* of love for their country.

Without entering into the disputed question, whether the general interests of literature have been promoted by the erection of a numerous host of heralds

and pursuivants, who every month announce the pretensions of the yet more numerous host of authors; and who not only arrange the lists, but determine the merits, of the respective combatants; even granting, that this kind of reading is very amusing to those whose taste is formed, and whose opinions are fixed, I think the guardians of the rising generation must agree with me, that there are many reasons why it is unsuitable for youth. Most of the publications of which I have been treating, are undertaken to serve the purposes of a party; and you will own that an impartial partizan is as rare "as the phœnix, that sole bird." I often think, that these tribunals owe much of the deference with which the public receives their fiat, to the very politic use of *plural pronouns.*" "*We* are firmly of opinion," "It is *our* decided judgment," are

phrases that carry with them an impressive authority, which poor singular *I* and *me* can never attain to. For many years, I never met with the above sentences without finding my fancy transport me into an extensive library, crowded with black coats, large wigs, and green spectacles. Each individual, holding in his hand the voluminous commentator on whom he had formed his judgment, while sipping his cup of tea, (the modern Helicon,) appeared in the act of pronouncing his oracular opinion on the impleaded author; while the moderator of the learned corps, collecting the suffrages as the *majority* decided, either crowned the work with immortal bays, or consigned it to oblivion. Well might I, and every unfortunate wight in my situation, tremble at an assemblage as formidable and invulnerable as that of the secret tribunal; but since I have been

enabled to take a peep behind the scenes, my terrors and my deference are considerably diminished. For, alas! my dear boy, these black coats, wigs, spectacles, and commentators, are but, "the baseless fabrics of a vision." *Number one* always constitutes counsel, jury, moderator, and judge; and *we* is only composed of *I* and *myself*. It is even whispered, that truth and verity would oftener conduct us into the *circumscribed attic*, than the *spacious library*, where you would meet with one solitary writer, glowing with rage and envy at a successful competitor, and earning his Sunday dinner by a virulent abuse of the pamphlet which had been extolled by a brother reviewer, and impeded the circulation of his own. Or it may be, that the sex as well as the scene may change; for the Gentleman's Magazine asserts it as a fact, that Mrs. Rudd, of

shocking celebrity, the accomplice, if not the seducer, of the unfortunate Perreau's, and so well known for her guilty depredations and flagitious conduct, gained her livelihood for many years by writing articles for reviews. The natural *talents* of this unhappy woman are said to have been very considerable; but allowing that she had received that degree of cultivation and improvement which would have fitted her to have been an arbitress of public taste, surely her *life* presented an indubitable argument against her being a fit guardian of public morals. When such characters are permitted to be judges, we may anticipate the tenor of their decrees.

I do not mean from this instance to infer, that the general conduct of these works is submitted to the direction of such regulators. If mean coadjutors are admitted into the lower departments,

the scientific parts, from which the reputation of the undertaking is principally derived, are generally committed to the care of people of real talent and learning, whose labours, may I not say unfortunately, give respectability to those dangerous opinions which they in fact disclaim; though, from contributing to the support of the miscellany in which these doctrines appear, they indirectly countenance them, and assist their promulgation. In no instance is the well-known proverb more fully verified; for here indeed, "evil communication corrupts good manners." The parts of the work which the *scholar* would deem trivial, are those on which the *general reader* fixes his first, if not sole attention; and no work can be safe, which contains, in some obscure corner, tenets that will stagger the principles of the *unlearned*, or rather, *partially* informed.

Another reason why I wish you to have but little acquaintance with the critical department is, that this kind of reading is extremely apt to increase that peremptory decision and opinionativeness which, although they are the *frequent* faults of youth, tend, perhaps, more than any other, to eclipse its natural graces. A young person deeply read in critiques, extracts, and beauties, can *talk* away upon any literary subject, and is considered, by all who do not know enough to despise his ignorance, as a *prodigy* of erudition. There is great danger that, while he thus grasps at the shadow of knowledge, he will lose the substance; and the probability of this evil will be encreased, should the ardour "of young ambition" induce him to *communicate* his opinions to the world at large. For some of our miscellaneous publications also afford a gratifying as-

sistance to the raptured speculatist, who wishes to soar to the top of Parnassus, by helping him to the feathers and the wax which are to fabricate his wings. Not only is the savoury regale spread to charm your ravished taste, but you are even invited to assist in *preparing* the repast. Not half so numerous on the plains of Lilliput, crowded the tiny squadrons round the sleeping Gulliver, as issue, at the call of Emulation, from the nursery's unfolding doors, troops on troops of *lisping sages;* skims the light pen over the paper's virgin purity, while papa rolls his eye-balls amazed, and mamma's chained tongue becomes motionless with rapture. Smooth glide the tuneful periods, tinkling with the wit of Aristophanes, the learning of Aristotle, the lightning force of Demosthenes, and Tully's sweet-toned oratory. Now they decide on themes of import high, not,

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gentle reader, on the comparative merit of cricket or ninepins; but whether the laws of Solon or Lycurgus were best suited to promote general good: not whether apple-pye or plumb-pudding should have the preference; but whether the palm should be awarded to ancient or modern literature. Crowd your ranks, ye critics of antiquity; neither Quintilian nor Longinus shall now have elbow room; for the *infantine* philosophers of Britain demand a seat among your venerable worthies. Veil your bonnets, ye blind legislators, who could not, from the experience of ages, decide a point which our lads of fourteen know by *intuition*. May we not henceforth predict that debating clubs will supersede the use of seminaries of education; and that the bat and ball will drop from the hands which aim to grasp a commander's truncheon? Nothing, my dear

Son, but sublime imagery and numerous prose, could display such triumphs; a far plainer style may, however, narrate their consequences. Encouraging these puerile attempts is called exciting a spirit of emulation; but emulation, like every other faculty, when it is not restricted by knowledge, is dangerous; and I rather suspect that this undertaking is one of the numerous ramifications of that system of insubordination which threatens destruction to the virtues, the graces, and, let me add, to the happiness of youth. I repeat the observations of a very excellent scholar, by whose superior judgment I am *proud* to be influenced, when I tell you, that these premature forced productions absolutely *enervate* the powers of the mind from which they are *permitted* to spring; and if the jejune efforts are so unfortunate as to be approved, a supposition

of extraordinary abilities seemingly supersedes the necessity of future exertion; for, the end of education being the formation of a clear discriminating judgment, when that end is obtained, the finished man may step forth into the world. But the judgment is a faculty that slowly unfolds; and, by stimulating it to an unnatural exertion, you debilitate its power, and infuse that false confidence, which is a perpetual hindrance to its future melioration. When we recollect the state of our minds at an early period of life, we must see much cause to feel grateful to the candour of our friends, who were not *disgusted* with the puerility of our opinions, and the *tenacity* with which we supported them; and we must *all* confess, that there was no occasion for the pride of authorship, or the incentive of public praise, to increase our absurdity. Yet thirty years ago,

the prevailing cast of manners was not in favour of a self-sufficient dictatorial young person; the powers of youth were *repressed*, instead of being *forced* into observation; and critics and legislators of fourteen would have been deemed as portentous as an eclipse or a comet.

Allowing emulation to be a proper sentiment for exciting youth to labour up the hill of learning with avidity, let it be directed to what it is possible for them to attain; I mean the progressive steps; and let them not be taught to run themselves out of breath, by an *impossible* effort to gain the summit. Let their efforts be confined to those elementary or mechanical parts of knowledge, in which their time of life will properly allow them to have made a proficiency; and some real advantage may ensue from awakening an aptitude and celerity in the means of improvement,

and the rudiments of knowledge; nor is there that hazard of inflaming self-conceit, when these efforts are confined to what is *suitable* and *attainable*. I will quit this subject, only adding, as my own observation, that if the declamatory skill of which I have been treating could be proved to be as beneficial as it really is injurious to the intellects, its effects upon the morals and the manners of young people must be so extremely prejudicial, that all judicious parents and guardians *ought steadily* to discourage it. The sentiments which children should excite are, love, complacency, and tenderness; the feelings which should grow in their own bosoms are hilarity and general good-will. Their manners should be docile, unaffected, sportive, or, if you please, careless and unobservant, but by no means dictatorial and opinionated. A discerning child is mostly sly

and cunning; and an overbearing one is so extremely disgusting, that the greatest portion of ability can hardly preponderate against this material disadvantage, even in the estimation of very candid people.

The same observations (a little relaxed in favour of the just claims of a period of life in which the mental powers have made a further advance towards maturity) may be extended to young people; who certainly are more agreeable in proportion as they longer retain the affectionate sensibility, the simplicity, vivacity, unsuspicious candour, amiable confidence, and all the smiling graces of enchanting youth. Its image is so attractive, so delightful, that I cannot help venting my detestation against this Necromancer who threatens to rob me of one of my most favourite pleasures: I mean the contemplation of such an ob-

ject as I have just described. For this presumptuous magician darkens with his spells the radiant sun of life's early morn; and, instead of the young person, whom God and nature purposed to be delighting and delighted, he presents us with a cynical, dogmatical, sceptical, preposterous, and in fact unhappy, because vicious, being. Help me, my dear Thomas, to some strong adjuration, by which I may exercise the rising hope and expectation of my country, and preserve them from the fatal influence of that "false Carle," who, assuming the name of philosophy, poisons even the sacred fountain of instruction.

Formerly, no danger was apprehended from a young man in your line of life acquiring a love of reading. Every parent took pains to encourage it in his son; and "he is safe at his books" was a common expression. Deistical

tenets were then enveloped in the *thick* pages of some metaphysical treatise; they were not *insinuated* into novels and pamphlets, and *lowered* to every capacity, or degree of leisure and information. It is not a new paradox to say, that the temper is never more dangerous, nor more active, than in the hours of our retirement and seclusion. Open indelicacy, and warm licentious descriptions, though not the general characteristic of our pernicious writings, are yet too frequent to justify our pretensions to purity; and, perhaps, if all the passages that so offend were selected from the numerous compositions of the present day, they would be found to equal in *profligacy of sentiment* the more gross expressions which occur in the writers of the age of Charles the Second. But the greatest danger to a young person arises from that confusion of the names and

nature of vice and virtue, which is a *singular and alarming* characteristic of the perverted moralists of these times. The general turn of German dramas and novels is marked by this feature; and it is a *distinguishing*, though *nicely concealed*, trait of a well-written, but paradoxical and highly dangerous, work of Rousseau's. In the new Eloisa you see a woman, who is described to be a model of perfection in mind and heart, voluntarily, and almost without temptation, submitting to prostitution; not from weakness, but from a passion, which is always described to be the effect of overflowing purity, virtue, and honour. With a heart full of the image of her lover, she gives her polluted person to a husband; who knowing her previous misconduct and present infatuation, *perseveres* in demanding her from her father; persuaded, that what is generally esteemed *infamous*

in a woman was, in Julia, a mark of *superior* virtue. It is also virtue and prudence, and wisdom too, for this husband to invite the lover of his wife to reside in his family, to leave them purposely in the most dangerous situations, and to encourage that intercourse which must fan the flame that he knew to be unsubdued. After some pleasing scenes of elegant retirement, and some good lessons of domestic conduct introduced to perplex our judgments, and to conciliate our affection for vicious characters, Julia succeeds in platonising her own affections, and in making her tyrannical father her romantic friend, and her phlegmatic husband as much attached to her lover as herself. She then dies, as inconsistently as she lived. Her disease is a fever, which it is well known affects the intellects, and debilitates the frame more than any other disease; but she

argues, dresses, eats, smiles, decorates her apartments, and continues, on the whole, a most entertaining companion. Rousseau gives us to understand that all this is possible, and that it proceeds from *determined* strength of mind; and he calls it living to the last. I *suspect* that he was never in the apartment of a dying person. His panegyrists boldly affirm, that nothing ever equalled this scene, except the death of Alceste in Euripides. I cannot judge of the merits of the comparison; but I have heard the Grecian bard commended for his attention to *nature;* and if that praise be just, the parallel must fail in its most *striking* point. I would wish to have Rousseau's description compared with the gradual decay, the natural struggles, the resigned composure of Richardson's Clarissa, whose short interrupted exclamations speak to the heart; while Julia's long

declamations are studied, forced, and artificial. But to be unnatural is a *venial* fault; I have something *stronger* to suggest. She is represented as religious, and almost verging to fanatical piety; yet, instead of any death-bed devotions, she expressly affirms that prayer is then improper. No satisfactory reason is given for this assertion, for all her faculties are unimpaired; she only tells us that, as she shall soon have nothing to do but with the Deity, she will dedicate the remnant of a life, absorbed by pain, to the service of those whom he taught her to love. Your unsuspecting mind will naturally suppose from this, that she meant to devote it to the moral and religious improvement of her family, to some pious instructions to the friend who was now to be their mother, or in some efforts to remove the incredulity of her atheistical husband, whom she had

just before declared she would willingly convert at the expence of her life. Alas, my child! you know not the actions of sophistical virtue. Julia, who had neither leisure nor faculties to address the throne of mercy, enters into a long recapitulation of her history; in which, without any remorse for her offence, she mentions the *inconveniences* which resulted from her guilty passion, and declares, "That Heaven directed her choice." Heaven (I repeat the term) *directed* her to *voluntary* seduction; and "virtue kept possession of her soul," even after her connection with St. Preux. You may suppose that the tears of penitence had effaced her crime; no such thing; like the first Eloisa, she sometimes talks of shame, but never as if she felt contrition. You may conclude that her passion was now subdued; quite the reverse; this paragon of virtue, this chaste

exemplary, prudent wife, writes to her lover on her death-bed to tell him, "That the love which she fancied extinguished, now expands, supports her when her strength fails, and cheers her soul even in death. This sentiment, she declares, never sullied her innocence; her virtue is unblemished, and her love has left behind it no remorse. She glories in her past conduct; and she dies happy to purchase, at the expence of her life, the privilege of loving him without a crime, and of telling him so once more." These are the enjoyments which the *dying saint* prefers to recommending her soul to heaven.

This woman is *said* to be a Christian; but, mark! a Christian described by the pen of an infidel. I need not revert to the story of her youthful life; she speaks thus in her last moments;

and she meets death, not only with hope, but with *confidence* and triumph. Her God, you will observe, is a being wholly made up of benevolence, whom she cannot fear. St. Preux is, I think, confessedly a deist. He is a compound of sophism and extravagance; and he too is most *viciously* virtuous. Wolmar, the husband, is a most *exemplary* atheist, virtuous, prudent, wise, moderate, wishing for conviction, yet unable to find it. Does the Deity usually estrange himself from such a character? Or rather, is not this description given with the most insidious design?

I will not trouble you with an examination of more of the nonentities that form the grotesque groupe of actors in this motley work. I do not wish to excite your curiosity to read it, but to guard you against being prepossessed in its favour by the extravagant and ill-

founded commedations of its admirers. Whenever you hear of the *virtue* and *piety* of Rousseau, remember that he generally affixes to those words a different meaning from what our religion prescribes. He deems virtue compatible with indulgence of sensual passion. He speaks of the exercises of devotion, in the person of his model of religious liberality, the Savoyard curate, thus: "I exert my faculties in the contemplation of the divine essence. I am affected by his beneficence; I praise him for his mercies; but I *never so far forget myself as to pray.*" This Savoyard, a most conscientious and exemplary Priest of the Christian God, is a professed deist. He administers every sacred right; he approaches the most holy sanctuary; and he *more than doubts* of the divine commission of Jesus of Nazareth. He is fully apprised of "the use of religion,

in being the consolation of the afflicted; the useful restraint which checks the indulgences of the rich and powerful; and the means of exciting in our hearts remorse from guilt and hopes from virtue;" and he employs the advantages of protection and confidence, to infuse into the mind of an unprincipled immoral fugitive a portion of his own scepticism, as the *means* of rescuing him from depravity.

And why is this good priest himself an unbeliever? " The majesty of the scriptures strikes him with admiration. He asks if such a composition as the gospel, so simple and so sublime, could be the work of man? or could the sacred personage, whose history it contains, be a mere man? If (he goes on) the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God; and the his-

tory of Socrates, which no one ever doubted, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ." The *ostensible* reason for rejecting Christianity is worthy of the inconsistency of Rousseau, who professes to give us, in this account, the opinions of an intimate friend by which he had formed his own ; and he affirms it to be a real narrative of the events of his early life. Our holy faith is incredible, because it rests for its evidence on the testimony of miracle and prophecy, and does not communicate itself to the soul of each individual in a supernatural manner. That is to say, he rejects miracles as inconceivable, yet requires that they should be multiplied in proportion to the number of human beings in the world. He thinks that we may be imposed upon by prophetic inspiration, and at the same time insists that every person should be a prophet.

He owns that Christianity is the best means that can be devised for regulating human conduct; yet he tries to invalidate its authority, to oppose its precepts, and to limit its diffusion. He, who on all other occasions is such a strenuous supporter of *freedom* of thought and action, as the source of virtue requires, in this instance, an *overwhelming* testimony which shall bear down the understanding. He builds his whole system of education on the position, that knowledge should be derived from attentive investigation; and he rejects religion because it does not act impulsively upon the soul, in such a manner as to preclude discussion.

But this is a mere pretence; the *life* of Rousseau, and that of his clerical monitor, furnished a stronger motive for denying the divine origin of the *pure* morality of the gospel. This boasted

man of virtue was a professed sensualist. His writings were a compound of extravagance, contradiction, and inconsistency; continually opposing his own principles, and sacrificing truth to paradox. It is affirmed, that his intellects were deranged; if so, we may pity the man, but still retain a horror of the writer; who, from the beauty of his style, the decency of his expressions, and the deceptions, (I may almost say) the *impenetrable* sophistry in which he guards his doctrines, may be esteemed one of the most *dangerous* that the new school of philosophy has produced.

The German literature, which we are so fond of importing, prosecutes the same design with far inferior powers. We meet with the same confused identity of vice and virtue: A lover kills his mistress, rather than endanger his faith to a banditti whom he had even

then determined to desert. A daughter, from the love of virtue, resolves to abandon an aged doating father, with a lover whom she knows to be pre-engaged. A virtuous husband feigns that he is prosecuting a criminal amour, to quiet the conscience of a guilty wife. If there be a woman who has submitted to prostitution, to patronize such a one is to protect innocence; and it is *heroical* to select her for your *wedded* partner, because, having known vice, she will hereafter be virtuous from choice: "This diamond," says brother Maurice, "is not less valuable because it has belonged to another." Is there a wild unnatural ruffian, he is a great soul who scorns hypocrisy. Such are the representations of these dramatists; but whatever term they may apply to these actions, do you ever call them by their proper name of *sentimental wickedness*.

Sentimental wickedness is infinitely more dangerous than sensual. Satan, when clad in the mild cherubic form, deceived " Urial, the sharpest-sighted spirit of all in heaven," and obtained admission into Paradise. In his own form he was foiled by the ministering Seraph Abdiel, and he stood abashed before the youthful Zephon. Vice formerly paid virtue homage, by affecting the disguise of hypocrisy; and when she wished to deceive, she assumed the tone, air, and dress of her celestial adversary. But now, when tricked out in her own meretricious ornaments, and marked by her peculiar emblazonry, she performs her most nefarious actions in the face of day; and boldly tells us that she is not Vice, but Virtue. Happily, we have an unerring rule by which to form our judgments: " By their fruits ye shall know them."

One letter has touched upon a very small part of this copious subject. The misrepresentations of infidelity and immorality are extended to such various topics, that some will unavoidably escape my observation, while I may too frequently allude to others from which I am most anxious to secure you. I will hope for a speedy opportunity of again addressing you, and in the mean time remain, &c.

LETTER XV.

MY DEAR THOMAS,

I DO not wonder at your expressing astonishment and detestation at the unprecedented and inexplicable fact of which I informed you in my last letter. The antichristian conspiracy was, indeed, such an infernal attempt to ruin the best hopes and dearest interests of mankind, by banishing what yet remains of the divine principle of good, and converting the world into the abode of wretched, criminal, hopeless beings, that, but for the "*incontrovertible evidence*" by which it is attested, I should not expect you to acknowledge that it *could* exist. Its effects, however, upon the continent of

Europe, have given it a most tremendous celebrity; and though from our insular situation, the active vigilance of our rulers, and, above all, the interposition of Providence, we have been less infected by the baleful contagion than our neighbours; yet impious and anarchical principles have been disseminated even among ourselves, though evidently *discountenanced* by the general voice of the nation. Except in a few instances of bold avowed attack, which, from being illegal, were repressed by the strong arm of the law, the advice of D'Alembert, recommending *cautious clandestine* measures, has been pursued in England; and the most inconceivable pains have been taken to subtilize the poison, or, in the cant of the conspirators, "*to strike, and conceal the hand.*" By these means many have been *tainted* with these doctrines, who would have

shuddered at them in their undisguised form.

I have already spoken of that sophistry by which vice is made to assume the name and language of virtue. But, as virtue itself, when urged beyond its due bound, necessarily becomes a weakness, or a vice, our philosophers have endeavoured to *beguile* that most amiable grace of the Christian character, I mean charity, when appearing in the lovely forms of candour and philanthropy, by urging them to *unjustifiable* extremes. With respect to candour, it may be necessary to observe, that it is, with them, extended from persons to opinions; and from opinions, it again reverts to persons. If a spirit of intolerance, highly adverse to the temporal interests of our *fellow-creatures*, prevailed two or three hundred years ago, the present times are no less remarkably (and I

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may say, *unfortunately*) distinguished by a spirit of religious indifference, equally detrimental to the immortal concerns of our *own souls.*

Two aphorisms, which I will select from the writings of the strong advocates (I should rather say the professed idolaters) of candour in religious matters, will shew you that it is urged far beyond any good purpose. For we are not merely told, that we have no right to *afflict* or harass our fellow-creatures because their belief is different from our own, or even to urge that belief as a reason for *withholding* from them the kind assistances of benevolence and good-will: to say this, would be to teach the words of "sound doctrine;" but it is actually affirmed, that "religion is one of the things in which mankind were made to differ;" and this sentiment, illustrated by a history, is inserted in a

work* expressly designed for the instruction of children, and which is attributed to writers who object to the early communication of *distinct* religious knowledge. The *story* by which this maxim is enforced, is not objectionable, it being an amplification of that predominating spirit of brotherly love, which our Lord exemplifies in the narrative of the Good Samaritan. But the *inference* is directly contrary to what our Saviour positively declares; who, speaking to the woman of Samaria on the differences which subsisted between her countrymen and the Jews, tells her, "Ye worship ye know not what, but we know what we worship: for *salvation* is of the Jews:" a proof that our Lord never meant we should *infer*, that the *religious tenets* of the priest and Levite were not

* Evenings at Home.

far preferable to those of the *humane* Samaritan, though the *social virtues* of the *latter* greatly *predominated*. I am at a loss for any *good* reason why this abstruse, disputable, and therefore certainly highly improper, position should be obtruded on the attention of children. Will not indifference in religion creep on fast enough, unless it be inculcated in the nursery ?

The other sentiment which I propose to notice, is introduced as flowing from the lips of an Indian sage ; but the commendations which are bestowed upon it justify me in giving it as the opinion of the writer* in whose works I met with it. "To vilify the religion of another, is to set at nought the pleasure of the Almighty." When you have once persuaded yourself that the Go-

* Belsham's History of George III.

vernor of the Universe is indifferent as to the belief of his creatures, indifference in *your own* belief follows, of course. If error and truth be alike in the sight of our Creator, either there is no such thing as truth, or you divest him of his essential attributes. We may pardon, perhaps commend, the above expressions from the mouth of a heathen; but no Christian can entertain them; for, if they are true, the Gospels are false; our Lord yielded up his life, the apostles preached, the martyrs suffered, not to *fulfil* the pleasure of the Almighty, but to *set it at nought*. For, certainly, the founders of our faith, by every means in their power, resisted, assailed, and vilified pagan superstition; and, if our holy records be true, these their attempts were attested by the most *extraordinary* and *unprecedented* marks of divine approbation. Did God therefore give

this confirmation to actions displeasing to him? or did the apostles and martyrs accomplish his will by converting the world from the worship of dead idols, and teaching them to serve the true and living God?

With respect to the licence that is claimed for opinion, I may observe, that our sentiments are not a matter of absolute indifference to our *fellow-creatures*; for I act as my own principles dictate; and if I believe myself to be free from religious, moral, and civil obligations, I cannot be a *safe* member of society. I may not, perhaps, have found a *fit* opportunity for putting my notions into practice; but if I *avow* them, if I endeavour to *recommend* them to others, I put mankind upon their guard; and, by the rule of self defence, they are *justified* in using every precautionary measure which can secure

themselves from the bad effects of my licentious ideas of independence and liberty. They must not wait till the maniac has murdered her keeper before they put on my manacles. Preventive expedients breathe the very soul of wisdom; for they secure the peace of my fellow citizens, and prevent me from increasing my crimes. It is ridiculous for me to complain that I suffer for opinion, and that opinion ought to be free. This liberty can only be granted (and that too in a limited sense) while our sentiments are confined to our own bosoms; for, even then, is not opinion thought? and when thought proceeds to intention, do not we Christians acknowledge that it is accountable at the tribunal of God? When we *communicate* our ideas to the public, it is unquestionable that they then partake of the nature of actions; and if they be

in themselves criminal, or if they tend to excite others to vice and disorder, they are justly *punishable* by human laws, and deserve the loud and general censure of mankind.

To speak of such notions, or of the people who acknowledge that they entertain them, in the same terms as we do of virtuous men, and right ideas, is not candour, but *criminal indifference*, arising from a degree of carelessness that does not prove others to be right, but ourselves to be wrong. All that candour requires of us in this case is, that we should not *suppose* the existence of latent principles, unless they are fairly deducible from those which are avowed, or from the general tenor of a person's conduct; and that we should refrain from charging *all* the culpable opinions of a sect or party upon *every* individual who arranges himself under its banners.

For it is well known in all conspiracies, that the framers of the plot reveal their full designs only to a few adepts; and this observation was remarkably exemplified in the antichristian conspiracy. The numerous missionaries who acted blindly under the influence of their leaders were mere zealots and novices, induced by the cry of religious and civil freedom, from some local disgust to the government under which they lived, or, perhaps, from a real persuasion that the welfare of mankind would be promoted by the adoption of the proposed reformation, to lend their aid to the completion of designs from which they would have revolted with abhorrence if they had discovered their *entire* drift.

It is the part of prudence, as well as of candour, to restrain that indiscriminating censure which may convert a well-intentioned but mistaken tyro into a furious

desperado; and when a person's conduct can be referred to want of full information, it is *right* to avoid giving it a worse construction. But this is not *justifying* the opinion itself; nor do we extenuate the guilt of the atrocious principle, by hoping that the consequences to which it tended were not in every instance foreseen.

We have now urged candour as far as it can be extended with propriety in respect to opinion; let us next consider it as it relates to actions. Mistake, ignorance, or a sudden start of passion, may be pleaded in excuse of an immoral deed. But then we hope that concession, and clearer information, may remove the two first causes of offence, and that penitence may efface the recollection of the latter. We are not authorised by our religion to offer any apology for wilful or deliberate crimes,

which are openly *avowed* and determinately *persevered* in. So far from it, we are commanded to abstain from such provocations, as we value our own salvation; to avoid the society of those who practise them, and resolutely to condemn all *notorious* sinners. Such conduct expresses the very spirit of Christianity; for is it the *temporal* interests only of our fellow-creatures for which we are to feel solicitude? are we to give our hungry enemy food, or drink when he is thirsty, and yet be careless and unaffected when we see him plunge into perdition? are we not to remember him in our prayers? and can we pray for his reformation if we do not *perceive* his guilt?

If you apply these principles to the candour and philanthropy which are now so much in fashion, and so artfully recommended to our admiration, you

will perceive that they differ so widely from the virtues which the apostles inculcated, that they cannot be fruits of the same tree. For your compassion is not solicited for those who are *mistaken*, or for those who *repent*: it is intreated "for poor suffering guilt" whenever it meets with its merited punishment. When it is going on triumphantly, and annexing crime to crime, compassion must then take another shape. She may sigh over the unavoidable miseries which great undertakings occasion; and as the author whom I have just quoted adds, she must then "hear and *hope* that all is for the best." Let me just observe, that I have never seen those spurious virtues of the Jacobinical school, philanthropy and sensibility, better delineated than in the very spirited lines which conclude the "Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin," and are entitled, "New Morality." If you bear

these descriptions in your memory, you will meet with their exemplification in every work that inculcates the new philosophy.

I have often been surprised at seeing the fashion of extreme (or, I should rather say, of vicious) candour adopted by people whose principles really were correct. If it be wrong to treat vice with levity, it is still worse to *extenuate* its guilt. I recollect a friend of my own, of whose rectitude I have had the most convincing proofs, speaking in this soft apologetical manner of a crime which is alarmingly frequent in high life. A married man had a criminal connection with the wife of another person. The guilt of the adultress was severely reprobated; but, when her paramour was mentioned, it was observed, "That the lady was so very attractive and charming, and his own wife so much the reverse,

that really he was *not much* to blame."

Innumerable plays, poems, and novels, are circulated to inculcate this idea. Some *irresistible* temptation is always pleaded; and yet we are assured that all temptations may be *resisted.* Vice is described as so very amiable! and yet we are told that vice is hideous, that it disgusts us at first sight, and that it is only by looking at it that we become at first reconciled and then enamoured. The guilty are represented as very *exemplary* people in all other respects except as to *one* crime; but are we unacquainted with the severe denunciations that are uttered against *every* sinful habit? and do we not know that sin, when persisted in, has a natural tendency to *corrupt* and *deprave* the heart? Sometimes, indeed, they are described as penitents, and restored by that purifying

principle to spotless innocence. But is the word *penitence* clearly understood and well defined by the behaviour of these converts? are they sorrowful for their past transgressions? do they seek to *repair* their fault? do they resolutely *amend* their lives? are they *humble* and *contrite* before the God whom they have offended? or rather, do they not, like Hamlet's Claudius, "wish to be pardoned and retain the offence?"

They who would thus *commute* with virtue, by paying her a little verbal reverence, while by their actions they confess their alliance with her inexorable enemy, may be justly said "to hold the truth in unrighteousness, to draw near with their lips, but in their hearts to be far off;" and consequently, instead of being in a state of reconciliation, they are the declared objects of "the

wrath of God." But though Christianity rejects them while they are in this state, the school of Rousseau will pronounce their apotheosis. To talk well, is sufficient there. The professors of his philosophy have a gauzy veil of sentiment, by the use of which they can give every crime an attractive lovely appearance; and to *suspend* a vicious assignation by performing an act of charity, or fulfilling a solemn engagement, *sanctifies* a character for life, and renders every *subsequent* crime a proof of virtue. These sciolists have an army of subterfuges, by which they confuse a plain understanding, till, harassed by continual skirmishes, and unaccustomed to ambushed fight, it yields, not to superior strength, but to incessant attack. Or else, betrayed by that bosom-deceiver, who is continually assailing the best of us, we are led to hope that what

looks so very amiable cannot be very wrong; and then, if we once deviate into the wilds of deism, our captivity is confirmed. Whenever you feel your mind staggered by the apologies that are offered for vicious actions, or by the soft phrases in which they are described, do not entertain the idea that this is Christian charity; for the candour which that enjoins, does not extend to *deliberate* guilt; it can only offer its prayers for the reformation of those who glory or who *persist* in their crimes. Every expression which denotes the lenity, compassion, and forgiveness of the Almighty, is strictly confined to those who repent and *endeavour* to amend. This last circumstance is of high importance; for though we may divide our time between sinning and sorrowing, yet, unless our sorrow was sincere while it lasted, and our purposed amendment pure from

any secret design of returning to our old offences, such sorrow, and such purposed amendment, is nothing but hypocrisy.

I have mentioned an *earnest desire* of reconciliation with God, as one of the genuine proofs of true repentance. Allow me to introduce the celebrated song in the Stranger*, in proof that this mark

* The author has subjoined the Song, that the reader may judge of her critique :

"I have a silent sorrow here,
A grief I'll ne'er impart ;
It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
But it consumes my heart.
This cherish'd woe, this lov'd despair,
My lot for ever be ;
So, my soul's lord, the pangs I bear
Be never known by thee.
And when pale characters of death
Shall mark this alter'd cheek ;
When my poor wasted trembling breath
My life's last hope would speak ;
I shall not raise my eyes to Heaven,
Nor mercy ask for me ;
My soul despairs to be forgiven,
Unpardon'd, love, by thee."

of Christian contrition is not only unnecessary, but absolutely hostile to the refined idea which German moralists entertain of this expiating quality. Adelaide is so far a penitent, that she abjures her paramour, and leads a recluse life of solitude and virtue. You may be sure that she is very charitable, because our philanthropists never fail to apply the *misapprehended* text, " that charity covers a multitude of sins." These stanzas, which are supposed to be her composition, are very humourously *parodied* in the " Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin," and are as remarkable for their inconsistency as for their immorality. The first contains the description of a very extraordinary and unusual passion, " A sorrow that breathes no sigh and sheds no tear, but yet consumes the heart." This may be the German way of grieving, but in England it is otherwise; and I observed

that Mrs. Siddons, who may *surely* be deemed a good judge of the passions, had recourse to both sighs and tears to express her own emotions, and to excite the sympathy of the audience, while she performed this character. The second stanza rises in the climax of absurdity; a penitent will rather *feel* than *cherish* woe; but the hope that ever accompanies true contrition must exclude *despair*, which is only the lot of the *desperately* wicked. I believe, that, were even these to express their feelings, they would rather say that they were a prey to it than that they *love* it. But why, in the name of the goddess of Nonsense, does Adelaide propose, by enduring these pangs, to commute with her husband's ignorance of them? She knew that he was a man of honour, who had beed driven frantic by her *guilt*, and therefore she wishes that he should never

know her *reformation.* By what sophistry, what refined perversion of morals, can this idea be reconciled to truth and nature?

I have nothing to say to the poetical periphrasis in the third stanza; but the fourth contains the very *quintessence* of illumination and deism. Neither the grammar nor the poetry are unexceptionable; but the moral is what I attack. The pious, penitent, exemplary Adelaide chooses to die of this sorrow that has no expression, without raising her eyes to Heaven, or asking pardon, because she has not been forgiven by her husband; and she is desirous that her husband should never know her remorse, for fear he should forgive her. What an extraordinary penitent!

Another favourite method of perverting morals, which is but too success-

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fully pursued is, by balancing duties in such a manner, that a very great crime shall wear the aspect of a very great virtue. Among the amiable qualities that are cramped by opposing duties, and contracted by refining explanations, none have fared worse than poor gratitude, which is now so completely *distorted* that it is classed with the family of vices. It was once deemed the noblest mark of a generous soul; it was welcomed in every form, while every man, with Lear, execrated the "marble-hearted fiend," its opposite. But since, we have been told, that to strive, or even wish to return the favours that we have received, argues not only a proud, but an unthankful mind; restless under obligations, we are confounded in our opinions; the generous hesitate, while the base pretend to exalted virtue

by pursuing the line of conduct which once subjected them to reproach.

There is, besides this, another invidious refinement, by which the benefactor and the person benefited are made to change places, and the latter *bestows*, instead of *receiving*, an obligation. A classic of the new school affirms, " that since, by conferring a benefit, we relieve ourselves from an uneasy sensation, and enjoy a pleasant one, it is obviously absurd to require any future acknowledgment from the parties whom we assist." If I am not mistaken, this very gentleman is much hurt at the ill return which the world has made him for his disinterested design of illuminating it. Does not the philosopher remember his own tenets? has he *forgotten* the sublime generous pleasure which he enjoyed while pouring out his

liberal store of wisdom? Let him at least be consistent, and rejoice that he has been selected, to feel in his own person, that there is *one* vice which needed not the aid of his sophistry to become prevalent. Shall he who wished to *annihilate* gratitude, complain that the world is ungrateful?

These fallacious principles are too absurd for refutation; to expose their absurdity, I need only quote the original words of the authors by whom they are adopted. None but a depraved heart can have recourse to such subterfuges. As these ideas of gratitude, and of opposing duties, were circulated in France, we need not wonder at those crimes which I most earnestly hope will never be imitated by the Christian world. On the 18th of September, 1791, Phillipe, of the Jacobin club*, presented to that

* Kett's "History the Interpreter of Prophecy."

society the heads of his father and mother, whom, as he boasted, he had with his own hand sacrificed to his country; and for this act he was warmly applauded. Several wives, husbands, and children, received what was termed *honourable* mention from the National assembly, for having denouuced (or, as we should say, betrayed) their respective husbands, wives, and parents. This is termed *patriotism;* and you will shudder to hear that such deeds have been justified, nay *applauded*, in England; and that too, by those very writers who frequently apply their versatile prostituted pens to disparage and discountenance that *patriotism* which would tend to nerve a Briton's arm against regicides, atheists, and perjured plunderers. Such, even according to the accounts of their own party, were the rulers of France at that period. An external decency of man-

ner is affected by the present rulers: God grant that it may be more than a convenient vizard!

It has long been customary to bestow a considerable share of praise on some actions which have been immortalized by elegant descriptions of classic authors. Let us recollect, in this place, the arguments of Dr. Hey, " and applaud the great actions of heathens, while that applause stimulates us to virtue; but let us expose their imperfections whenever their motives of action are opposed to our own higher and purer principles."—" Timoleon, glorious in his brother's blood;" and " he that did love Cæsar while he struck him?" might appear great and glorious to heathens, who certainly thought it right, not only to overcome the sacred claims of nature, but even to do actions which they knew to be morally wrong, to pro-

mote the welfare of their country. But are not these admired deeds the unsubstantial offspring of the deceitful, uncultured, unmeliorated, tree of morality? and is it to bring forth no *better* fruit when it has been engrafted with the scion of revelation? For eighteen hundred years it has been pruned, dressed, and enriched, by the application of *fertilizing* juices; and, if the produce be not superior to the virtues of a Timoleon and a Brutus, may we not fear the immediate infliction of the awful sentence, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Our principles prohibit us from doing evil, that good may come of it. We are not permitted to lift our hand against the life of our fellow-creature, unless sanctioned by the command of lawful authority or in self-defence. No plea, no pretext can justify assassination. By preserving this tenet in your

mind, you will know how to appreciate the value of those splendid deeds which form the basis of so many works of fiction, and which probably stimulated Charlotte Cordé to sacrifice her own life in ridding France of one of its demagogues. Her murder of Marat has been much commended; but surely the *atrocious* guilt of the man was more *indisputable* than the merit of that desperate action. We are told of "her angel and avenging arm," which has given a new character and impulse to her sex. Deists may avenge, but they must renounce their principles before we can style them angels. Christians may, even in this life, make humble approaches to the purity of angels; but then they must not avenge. They must leave it to Him who claims it as his peculiar right. "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

If you should ask me, "whether my precautionary suggestions are meant to insinuate that you should read no books but those which are manifestly written in the defence of religion, or those which are strongly *tinctured* with piety?" I would answer "By no means." On the contrary, I think that amusement is lawful; that varied information is highly serviceable; and that confining your studies within such limitations would be very unsuitable to your period of life, and might give an enthusiastic contracted bigotry to your character. If it had not become necessary to counteract the wiles of our enemies, who have seized on the lighter kinds of literature, and made them the vehicles of their dreadful tenets, I would recommend that books of amusement should be kept *clear* from the subject of religion. Solomon was not required

to blend the worship of the sanctuary with the festivals and dances of the "ivory palaces." But then those palaces should not have been devoted to "the worship of Milcom, the abmination of thr Moabites, or Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians." If a sense of religion pervade the *heart* of the writer, nothing *offensive* to its spirit will appear even in those *light* compositions which are dedicated to mirth and hilarity. He will not recommend vice by placing it in an advantageous point of view. He will use no sophistical arguments in its favour. He will not seek to inflame the criminal passions. He will speak of the failings of virtuous characters, in the terms which they really deserve, as faults and blemishes; and if he deals in fiction, he will take care that those errors shall produce inconveniences which may deter others

from similar practices. Above all, he will abstain from insulting the honoured form of religion, either by ridiculing her doctrines, her institutions, and her ministers, by sly insinuations, and oblique sarcasms, which tend to degrade her in the estimation of the public, or by openly avowing the principles of Deism. This attention to decency, to morals, and to Christianity, is strictly required from all who *profess* themselves to be members of any Christian communion. Even supposing them to be declaredly *hostile* to the church of England, they are bound to observe the rules of a fair, open, honourable warfare, or they convert religion into a mere *stalking-horse* of faction. The most malignant of our enemies dare not *assert*, that the abuses of the establishment are equal to the abuses of irreligion; and no one, who is not a secret friend to infidelity, will

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insidiously try to undermine that worship which is usually allowed to be the strongest bulwark against the common enemy. If they think that our church is corrupted, let them prove it to be so by arguments suited to the gravity and importance of the proposition. But let them not seek some obscure corner, some dark ambush, from which to shoot out their envenomed arrows. What better term can we afford to those miscellaneous productions which avarice and indigence continually obtrude upon the public, than that they are the dens of sedition and blasphemy? They attract attention by an alluring title and splendid embellishments. By discussing those *temporary* subjects which engross general conversation, they obtain an extensive circulation. They flatter vanity, discontent, and calumny, by affording a ready admission to those *anonymous* at-

tempts which the writers have enough remaining modesty to blush to *avow*; and, by enabling their readers to *talk*, of what other people *talk*, they are supposed to communicate a vast deal of information. The knowledge which they really contain consists of *short* extracts from different authors on various subjects, without any arrangement or connexion.

I have already observed, that it is impossible to form a candid judgment of any person's character, or of any historical event, without some degree of chronological and geographical knowledge. Dr. Hey severely censures a very eminent writer of ecclesiastical history, for a boyish flippancy degrading to the character of a scholar, in trying all men by the standard of *modern* improvement; which method, he says, "tends to weaken all habitual reverence,

and to destroy whatever is established." It is with this view that biographical anecdotes are retailed in the works of which I am speaking; for they do not *aim* at giving you clear fair ideas of preceding ages. They are selected at random from any writer, or any period; and the intention of them is, to impress on your mind the rapacity, cruelty, incontinence, perfidy, and punishment of conquerors, tyrants, and bigots; or else to make you *enamoured* of the virtues and heroic deeds of patriots and demagogues. These are retailed from author to author, till the last recital loses all resemblance of the original story. Facts are described as certain, which are in reality doubtful, and the most ambiguous authority is spoken of as *indisputable*, if it will cast a dark hue over some person who belonged to the higher orders of mankind; and equally spu-

rious records are explored, to elevate ruffians and banditti into the rank of worthies. No matter how absurd the anecdote, or how contemptible the testimony, if it does but unsettle received opinions, the end will be answered, and it is circulated with avidity.

I know of no person who has met with severer treatment from these story-mongers than Alexander the Great; and it is a singular circumstance that the very actions by which he sought to obtain divine honours, have now almost degraded him to the class of demons.

"Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!"

Mr. Pope led the way, and in one short couplet "damn'd him to everlasting fame" for a *madman.* Dr. Hawkesworth joined the cry, and by his cele-

brated parallel between him and Bagshot, made him greatly *inferior* to a *murderer* and a *highgwayman*. Scarcely a writer has since issued from the democratic school, who has not hurled a dart against the "great Emathian conqueror, who spared the house of Pindarus." Even in those books which are appropriated to the instruction of children, poor Alexander is gibbeted, not for his passionate excesses, nor for his indulging in brutal inebriety, from which faults admirable morals might be deduced, that would prove of general utility; but for what no one below the rank of a sovereign prince can attempt to imitate him in, his extensive conquests. These lovers of freedom have surely forgotten the rapacity and ambition which prompted the sovereigns of Asia to attempt the subjection of Greece; and also that they *persevered*

during a long series of years to harass that country by every art of secret fraud or open force: or else they deny a principle which is esteemed necessary to the preservation of all states, I mean the right of carrying war into an enemy's country.

In early life, Alexander was a model of generosity, temperance, and fortitude. His achievements were wonderful and unprecedented. His passions were violent; youth is naturally inconsistent and unreflecting; and, at an age when most men are debating what part to choose in life, he subdued the most powerful states that then existed. Thus circumstanced, he was naturally surrounded by parasites, and it was but too probable that he would listen to their adulation. Such was the event; he spurned the salutary check of self-controul; he gave full sway to his lawless

appetites ; and it is conjectured, that, intoxicated by prosperity, flattery, and continual excess, there were moments in which he *really* believed himself to be the son of Ammon. His religion imposed no restraints upon his actions. His "fabled Sire" was the most licentious of beings ; the God Bacchus enjoined debauchery, and both he and Hercules had obtained their thrones on Olympus by having marched victorious through the world. No principle then existed which tended to repress ambition or the love of conquest. It was, indeed, held criminal in Greece to attempt to subvert the independence of *free* countries ; but to carry fire and sword against *barbarians* and *slaves* was esteemed not only lawful, but meritorious. The expressions which Alexander uttered in a moment of severe conflict, "O Athenians ! how much do I suffer, to

gain your commendations!" proves, that his conquests were conformable to the sentiments of the most *enlightened* part of the heathen world.

The story of this Hero and the Thracian robber, which seems to imply that his actions were *then* esteemed unjustifiable, is, I am told, founded on an anecdote of a Pirate, who held such a conversation with Alexander; but that it is preserved by an author who wrote at too great a distance from the times of which he treated, to give much authenticity to the communication. The actions of Alexander must not be judged by that comparatively juster mode of thinking, which was introduced into the world a little previous to the birth of Christ, and which might probably be derived from the diffusion of the Jewish scriptures among the Pagans. At the time when this hero flourished, Greece was

almost the only part of the world that had made much progress in mental cultivation. The Tyrians were merely merchants and mechanics, and the despotism and luxurious effeminacy of the Persian government must have *retarded* "the noble growth of thought" in that extensive empire. It would be still more unjust to try this renowned conqueror by Christian principles; and, indeed, if many of his censurers were not callous to the charge of inconsistency, they would feel no right to require that he should be judged by them; for though this exalted criminal stands in that predicament of kingship, which is so inexcusable in their eyes, the *initiated* sophist, whom I have lately described to you, must not admit that actions which cannot be condemned by the light of nature may be by that of revelation; for

that would be to admit that revelation is a *surer* guide.

The *real* practice of that candour of which we *hear* so much, requires us to judge of every action by the degree of light which the actor possessed; and this rule obliges us to confess, that, so far from the martial enterprises of Alexander exciting the censure of his contemporaries, or being by them esteemed culpable, they gained him *universal* admiration and esteem. It is worthy of remark, that while every petty scribbler is *nibbling* at his character, or execrating him for having been the troubler of the world, the very part of his conduct on which they generally fasten (I mean his Indian expedition) has procured him the commendation of two of our most judicious and learned writers, Dr. Robertson and Dr. Vincent, who

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see, in his attempt to explore "the golden Chersonese," great political sagacity and commendable patriotism. The inconsistency of his detractors is as remarkable as their malignity; for they vilify him for what they always affect to praise, a desire to promote *commercial* advantages. His march towards the Indus was rather a journey of discovery than of conquest; and the researches of his fleet, which coasted along the shore, were directed to the same purpose. Both tended to promote an object well worthy the ambitition of an enterprising enlightened prince; namely, to open a communication between his own country and the rich nations of the east.

There are, indeed, parts of Alexander's character which are extremely censurable, being contrary to the light of nature, and to the principles which he had imbibed in his early youth,

Alexander at Persepolis and Bablyon, bears little resemblance to Alexander visiting his royal captives, or confiding in his accused physician. But let us not convert a useful lesson, capable of *general* moral improvement, into an engine of democracy. As a man, Alexander may read lectures to impetuous youth on the subject of violent anger, intemperance, and vanity. As a prince, he is not likely to be imitated by any sovereign of these times; nor would he, in the present state of society, afford either a safe or a *practicable* model. To conclude this subject; as there are very few preceptors that are called upon to tell *princes* their duty, it would be more judicious in writers who engage in the line of education, to adapt their instructions to the situation of the instructed, by enlarging on the obligations of *subjects*.

I have been led into this digression from a desire of illustrating my remarks by an example of the misrepresentations of which I complain. But to return to the subject of the miscellanies before alluded to. If what they borrow be either in itself censurable, or perverted by being misplaced, what is original is still more highly dangerous. I know that there are exceptions to the charges which I am going to produce; but the *major part* of these publications are in the hands of people who are either the initiated adepts, or the credulous dupes, of that pestilent sect which has corroded the happiness, disturbed the tranquillity, and corrupted the virtue of Europe. Under the pretence of free discussion, they introduce subjects that should never be treated in an *irreverent*, unskilful manner. By a dogmatical assertion, or a light sarcasm, they convey to the minds

of their readers that doubtful perplexity, or secret contempt, which may give a lasting taint to their principles. Learning would, indeed, instantly detect the fallacy of these bold assertions, and consideration would defeat the irrelevant, indecent sarcasm; but should we be justified in expecting learning and consideration among a class of readers where, in the common order of things, they are very seldom found? Our new moralists have *sounded* the depths of the capacities which they address; and therefore they do not attempt a chain of arguments, proofs, and deductions. They hazard what they call "bold truths:" the sound of these words is imposing; and aware that the biographical and historical departments of the work will correspond with the critical and didactic, by bringing the passions of their readers into the state which they desire, they dash on,

without either fear or wisdom. Volubility, and a glossy tinkling style, are the perfections at which they aim. The conclusions are always the same ; namely, that the higher orders of mankind are either knaves or fools ; that poverty, wisdom, and virtue are synonymous ; and that gradations in rank and fortune are unjust tyrannical institutions, contrived by the rapacity of the few, and injurious to the welfare of the many. These tenets are so continually enforced by democratical writers, and are so intimately combined with their false code of morals and perverted system of religion, that I wish to examine with minute circumspection the foundation on which they are built.

The unsophisticated mind, that has been early accustomed to form its ideas and to regulate its principles by the volume of revelation, sees nothing inex-

plicable or insupportable in those different conditions of mankind which so *sorely* discompose the proud ad turbulent spirit of the false philosopher. A very moderate understanding, enlightened by scriptural knowledge, and under the guidance of an honest heart, may perceive that inequalities of rank or fortune are, in reality, designed rather for general than individual happiness; for, as a man's possessions *enlarge*, his cares, his occupations, and his duties, necessarily *expand*. Nay, as inequalities in the face of nature produce not only a more agreeable prospect, but also a greater extent of surface; so in the moral world it may be proved, that the different degrees of high and low, rich and poor, actually make *room* for a larger number of human beings to subsist in *comfort* than could be the case if all were on the same level. If the poor are necessary to

the rich, the rich are no less so to the poor. No great works, either of public or private utility, could be carried on unless they were supported by an efficient capital; and labour being the poor man's wealth, if there were no commercial exchange to supply him with the necessaries of life for the use of that labour, he would perish for want. If property were equalized to this kingdom, which is so thickly inhabited, the rich would be reduced to penury, but the situation of the poor would not be improved. The little field which, in a regular distribution of landed property, would be the portion of each family, would not afford the poorest man that supply of necessaries which it is now in his power to procure by a diligent, *industrious* application to some agricultural or mechanical employment. Nay more, from the defective sort of husbandry

which the poverty of such petty occupants would afford, the earth would be found insufficient to supply even a bare scanty subsistence to the numerous beings who depend upon it for support. This would be succeeded by the inevitable ruin of all arts, manufactures, and science, and would complete the destruction of the most flourishing nation; reducing it from an *enviable* state of greatness and opulence, to weakness, misery, and absolute *barbarism*, from which latter state no nation ever could have emerged, but through the slow operation of different talents, unequally imparted, but all working from the motive of self aggrandisement, to the promotion of public good. For, as no one has the capacity of executing every thing well, it follows, that each person, by appropriating his particular powers to some especial end, may acquire com-

parative excellence in his peculiar calling; and thus the public at large will reap that advantage from united attainments which it never could acquire from solitary individual efforts. As these considerations sufficiently exhibit the advantages which result to society from inequality of condition, so they not only prove the *moral* necessity of those distinctions of which our sophists complain, but also a *physical* necessity of their continuance. The working hand must be too much occupied in its laborious task, to obtain that improvement which would enable it to occupy the place of the ruling head. So likewise, as it is impossible to prove that the diversities of human intellect are owing to accidental or local causes, it must ever happen, that, even in states constituted (if it were possible) according to this new system, inequalities either of natural talents, or in the judicious ap-

plication of them, must continually cause variations in external situation; and thus, at the close of every generation, esh distribution of property must take place.

But it is ridiculous to adduce arguments to disprove a system that would annihilate order, security, talents, knowledge, exertion, property, virtue, and happiness: a system, happily, so totally *impracticable*, that it never had any existence but in the crude imaginations of those sophists who, under the pretence of a love to natural equity, do not really wish to eradicate wealth and power, but to *transfer* them from their lawful possessors to themselves. I have already told you that Rousseau's love for paradox induced him to suppose, that man, originally, existed in a state of perfect *savagism*, as he styles it, destitute of any language, connection, habitation, or

clothing; ignorant of the use of fire, or of any instrument of defence; unconscious even of his parents and children; his dormant powers (or, as I should rather say, his future *perfectibility*) so enveloped by unobserving unreflecting ignorance, as not to be in any one degree superior to, or distinct from, his brother animals in the forest. Nay, I think he seems to insinuate, that we were originally monkeys; from which species we have improved, or rather *perverted*, our natures till we arrived at our present state: for you will be shocked to hear, that the wild enthusiast pronounces this being, whom he has thus fabricated, happy and innocent, compared with man in a state of society. What must be the heart of that man who could form such an idea of his fellow-creatures? But you must observe, that at the time of adopting this notion, Rousseau chose to place

happiness in perfect liberty and total indolence, and to call apathy and negligence virtues. It is unnecessary to demonstrate the unsupportable wretchedness of the state which is above described: blessed be God! it never absolutely existed.

We have never met with any race of beings so totally insulated and destitute. Yet Europeans have frequently penetrated into countries which, from the appearances of natural productions, and from the scanty portion of inhabitants, may be proved to have been but very recently inhabited. In this, as in every other instance, actual examinatian confirms the testimony of divine revelation, which not only gives a decided contradiction to Rousseau's chimeras, but presents us with an account of the first formation of human society, and the early inequality of condition, which, besides

the confirmation of divine authority, possesses that internal evidence of probability which arises from coincidence with the deductions of experience and sound political wisdom. The history of the creation, the fall, the corruption of mankind, the deluge, the restoration of the human race, the building of Babel, the confusion of languages, the dispersion of the sons of Noah, and their formation into distinct societies and nations, were *disclosed* by Moses to the people of Israel; or rather, under the immediate influence of divine inspiration, which enabled him to discern truth from falsehood, he *collected* the traditions which his countrymen had received from their patriarchal ancestors, and framed them into one narrative. I have already spoken of the divine mission of Moses; and I question, whether the hardiest infidel, who now talks of the absurdity and improbability

of these stories, would have suspended his assent when he saw Sinai trembling and kindling under the presence of the descending Deity, and the favoured Moses ascending the burning mountain in safety, while the rest were restrained from touching it, at peril of their lives.

I need not recapitulate what I have said respecting the care that was taken to preserve the writings in which the above accounts are contained uncorrupted by subsequent interpolations. I will only observe in this place, that the believer is not called upon to prove the *similarity* of these events to what now passes in the world; for we acknowledge that they belong to that species of miracles which, for particular reasons, interrupts the general course of Providence, as the other does to that which *suspends* the order of nature. But, so far from considering it improbable that the

Almighty should thus interfere in the early periods of the world, we think it would have been more miraculous, or, to use their favourite terms, absurd and improbable that he should not. Whoever seriously believes that the earth and its first inhabitants were created by divine power, and considers how weak and ignorant man must be while destitute of the experience and the dicoveries of *previous* generations, cannot doubt* the probability that the Deity would, like a tender provident parent, frequently give his *directing* assistance to his helpless offspring: sometimes interposing by extraordinary visitations of judgment and mercy, sometimes speaking to the human heart by perceptible inspirations; not merely communicating future promises and threatenings, but actually inflicting punishments and bestowing rewards, not solely upon indi

viduals, but upon the whole human race. Such, in the antediluvian world, was the preference shewn to Abel, the curse of Cain, the selection of Seth, and the translation of Enoch: all which circumstances were admirably calculated to impress on the human mind the idea of a Theocracy, or divine government, by showing the Almighty actually interposing with acts of regal power.

Nor is there any injustice in God's punishing the race of those criminals who notoriously transgressed his avowed will. We know that an irreligious education generally tends to make people irreligious, and that depravity often runs through several generations. It is often affirmed, "That God will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children;" but it is never added, *even* if the children were *innocent* of their father's sins. In the race of Cain and Canaan, we *know*

that the descendants of those guilty men were notoriously wicked, audacious, and profane. If any of them escaped the general contamination, we know, as well from natural perception as from revealed religion, that they would either be rescued from the impending punishment in this life, or rewarded for their virtue in the next. The absurdities and improbabilities, with which deists charge revelation, arise from their own perverse style of argument. They say that the light of nature discovers a future state; and yet, when they treat of the *narrative* part of scripture, they always affect to consider the *present life* as if it was the *limit* of human being. They talk of the blessings of existence; they, who by suicide are continually proving that it is often an insupportable burden. They talk of the injustice of the God of revelation, who, they say, is described as punish-

ing, torturing, and exterminating his creatures; and yet, when they bring forward their system of morality, they say that virtue is *perfected* by pain and conflict, and vice *reproved* by the natural evils which it occasions. They acknowledge (at least many of them do) that there must be another life to remedy the inadequate dispensation of good and evil which takes place in this. Why then do they doubt that the Creator of the universe, of whom they profess to entertain such an exalted conception, will, in some of those numberless worlds, which were formed by his hand and are governed by his eye, bestow a full beatitude on those *innocent* victims whom the great prescripts of his *universal* government either *circumscribed* in their temporal existence, or rendered miserable by the infliction of some general calamity, designed as an admonitory

example to the rest of their species? Will not the brightness of an ever-during day compensate for the cloud which hung over their morn of being? Can the sufferings of a transitory state inflict a wound which cannot be healed in immortality? Can the soul, during the few years of its imprisonment in its clay tenement, sustain injuries that everlasting happiness cannot compensate? Be just, thou man of reason! to thine own principles. Cease to tax revelation with giving an inconsistent idea of the divine attributes; or else renounce that expectation of futurity which thou sayest nature and reason have discovered; but of which thou, indeed, derivest thy knowledge from that revelation which thou ungratefully abusest.

These reflections on the divine government should be deeply imprinted upon our minds before we speculate on

the formation of society, and the consequent division of mankind into rich and poor, subjects and rulers. The illustrations that the book of Genesis affords us in these particulars are extremely simple and concise; which circumstances may be esteemed *internal* marks of its great antiquity. We may conceive that man, at his first creation, would possess a greater degree of moral and physical perfection than of mental improvement or scientific intelligence. We read of the *invention* of some useful and elegant arts seven generations after Adam ; and it is humbling to human pride to consider, that at this period the corruption of mankind had arisen to such a tremendous height, that the divine forbearance "would no longer strive with man." "Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle ; Jubal the father of those who handled the harp

and organ: Tubal Cain an instructer of every artificer in brass and iron, with his sister Naamah." These, the Mercury, Apollo, Vulcan, and Venus, as it is believed, of the new world, perished, doubtless, in that awful desolation which annihilated the old. All that we know of the history of the antediluvian world is comprised in a few short chapters. Its catastrophe proves that its manners were dreadfully depraved; and it is believed to have been generally idolatrous, with the single exception of the family of Noah. Its government is supposed to have been patriarchal, because its chronology is determined, not by the rise of empires, nor the reigns of sovereigns, but by the lives of the heads of each generation that intervened between Adam and Noah. This form of government was preserved for some generations after the deluge. It could only

be salutary in that state of society in which mankind were pure and simple in their manners, and while a deep sense of religious awe and filial reverence preserved them from the gross abuses which the mildness of parental authority would want *coercion* to restrain. Perhaps this may be one reason for the *enormous* wickedness of the antediluvians. We know, that the chosen people were never so flagitious as when " there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes;" and I cannot help observing, that, notwithstanding the partiality which our sophists affect for the patriarchal institutions, their *contempt* for religion, and *avowed* abjuration of parental authority, would render them very *improper* subjects for this mode of government. But to return.

The creation, the fall, and the deluge,

make, as I have before observed, a part of the traditionary records of almost all nations. The buildings of Babel is plainly alluded to in the history of the giant's war: and every distinct nation that exists on the face of the earth is a positive witness of the confusion of tongues, and the dispersion of the sons of Noah. I would wish you to compare the amusing but fanciful tales of heathen mythology with the plain dignified narrative of scripture. Here Pelion is not piled upon Olympus, nor does Jupiter launch his thunders against the devastating Titans. "Go to," say the sons of men; "let us build us a city and a tower, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth: And the Lord said, 'Behold, the people is all one, and they have all one language, and this they

begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to; let *us* go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand each other's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence over the face of the whole earth." Such was the result of the first conspiracy of human pride, not to eradicate the knowledge of the Supreme Being from the face of the earth, but to counteract the purposes of his moral government, for we may presume, though the scriptures are silent upon the subject, that this presumptuous act of rebellion had been preceded by some *intimation*, that it was the purpose of the Almighty that the sons of men should emigrate into distant countries, and people the whole earth. Confounded by a miracle

THE TANJORE ... MAHAL ...

which displayed divine puissance and human weakness in the most marked and *appropriate* manner, the rebellious tribes, who had harboured the impious design of becoming independent of their Maker, forsook their native residence in the plains of Armenia, and progressively journeyed towards the regions which they were compelled to inhabit; not solitarily, but in tribes and families; not ignorant of language, but each division speaking their peculiar dialect; not uninstructed in the use of fire, but acquainted with its advantages for many ages; not strangers to "relations dear, and all the charities of father, son, and brother," but, from the circumstances of the government to which they had been hitherto accustomed, taught to regard these sacred ties with a strength of attachment which our different habits will hardly permit us to conceive. They

carried with them a traditionary knowledge of the true God, of the creation, and, above all, of that recent event, the deluge. That awful infliction of divine wrath, and the defeat of their rebellious projects in the plains of Shinar, impressed their minds with more fear than love of the Almighty; and hence we may account for the unworthy and horrible ideas which many nations entertained of the Deity. We have reason to believe, that no future revelation was made to any of the human race, except to one branch of the favoured family of Shem. All, therefore, that the Heathen world retained of religion must either be derived from the mere light of nature, or from the usages and instructions which Noah had imparted to his descendants. As the general traditions of the corruption of the human race, the deluge, and the almost universal use of

sacrifices, could not have been suggested by the deductions of reason, we must ascribe them to the latter scource.

With the information that I have already noted, these fugitives carried with them the knowledge of several useful arts. Those which were invented immediately before the flood were, doubtless, preserved in the family of Noah. Agriculture was understood and practised, or why did the Holy Spirit promise a perpetuity of seed-time and harvest? We find too, from a lamentable instance of human frailty, that Noah was not only a husbandman, but that he also planted a vineyard, and was acquainted with the use, or rather with the abuse, of wine. We know, and in this instance also from the depravity of the world, that the dispersed tribes knew enough of mechanic arts to erect *vast*

edifices; and in two generations after, we hear of ancient Nineveh, Resen, and Calah, which were styled *great cities.* The preservation of their immediate progenitors in the ark must have made them in some degree acquainted with navigation; not indeed with that art sufficiently to have enabled them to explore the seas which separated distant regions, for this was a discovery that took place at a late period; but they must have been capable of constructing vessels adequate to the purpose of fording a river, or coasting round a shore. What else they might understand we cannot now ascertain; but you must discover an immense difference between the real founders of the different nations of the earth, setting out from the spot which was signalized by their rebellion and humiliation, and tra-

velling by slow degrees to their destined residence, and the aboriginal ourang-outangs of Rousseau.

Instead, therefore, of wasting your time to enquire, whether we really went at first upon all fours, and how many ages might elapse prior to our first discovering our power to communicate our thoughts by speech; your mind may be more profitably exercised in a most ample field of gratifying discussion. You will conceive that some of these emigrants meeting with few difficulties, and soon acquiring a convenient habitation, improved and cultivated the arts which they possessed, and invented more: and you will trace in these the first founders of the mighty Assyrian empire. You will suppose others, either from some greater degree of depravity, or from some local causes, degenerated into the wildness of savage barbarism. You

will discover colonies of a peaceable gentle character extending over the vast tract of India, impelled and guided by the hand of Providence, till they arrive at the eastern extremity of Asia, where, for almost immemorial ages, the Chinese have boasted of astonishing perfection in mechanical arts, and a system of policy rigorous and authoritative indeed to a very great degree, but wise, well compacted, and conducive to public good. At a far less distance from the spot which "cradled the human race," you will contemplate the Tartar hordes, and all the fierce Sarmatian tribes, sinking into a state of brutal ferocity, and savage privation of the comforts, and sometimes of the necessaries of life; in which situation they have continued above three thousand years. While naturalists are puzzled to define the effects of climate, soil, habit, and various other local

circumstances, I trust you will never *rest* in such explanations, but discern, through the medium of second causes, the guiding and regulating hand of God.

Not knowing where to point out a subject that affords such satisfactory, and, I might add, improving reflections, I will leave you to follow with your imagination the fathers of the human race, and the founders of empires, in their first efforts at establishing their respective settlements. Only take scripture for your guide, and beware of indulging *any* chimeras on subjects which have been plainly *detailed* in the sacred volume. Where it no longer condescends to instruct us, we must abide by human testimony; where that also fails we may, with modest diffidence, cautiously enter on the wide sea of conjecture, which may

lead us to truth, but which oftener conducts us to error. How blind and rash must they be, who reject the evidence of inspiration, and, after all, cannot fabricate a *plausible* system to supply its place!

I must resume this subject in my next Letter; till then, my dear Child, adieu, &c.

LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR SON,

THE present form of society, or as it is most invidiously termed, the unjust inequality of condition, which at this time subsists in the world, is such a favourite topic with our system-venders, that we must bestow a considerable degree of attention upon it: though, indeed, the folly and impiety of their objections to it are notorious. The epithets which I have just used are not, however, inseparable; for folly is not *always* so absurd as to become impiety. Give her a cap and bells, and let her shake her rattle at subjects that are within her narrow sphere, and we will not only

laugh at her, but with her. A good-humoured, well-meaning, lively, silly person, is not only innocent, but almost amiable; for his good qualities excite affection, or, at least, soften contempt into tenderness and pity. But when impiety lifts its voice against its Maker, we know that this is folly in a *diabolical* form, and contempt increases into detestation.

Such is the sentiment which I know you must feel for that pretended *conjectural* wisdom which affects to set up against revelation, not merely by openly denying its authenticity, but by secretly sapping its foundation. The assertion, that all moral evils flow from the inequality of mankind, and that this inequality proceeds from the tyrannous usurpations of the rich, the powerful, and designing, is ascribable to this source. If there be a truth plainly af-

firmed in scripture, it is, that these inequalities are conformable to, and in consequence of, the will and declaration of our Divine Creator. And if there be a truth in morals or an axiom in politics, which may be confided in, it is, that this very *execrated* inequality conduces to the improvement of our virtues, the confirmation of our security, and, consequently, to the increase of general happiness.

I would not be so mad as to attempt an argument with those who maintain that man was happier without clothes, speech, dwelling, or idea, scampering about the woods, and feeding upon berries and acorns, than he is now in a well-regulated civilized society. I need not, I am sure, recal to your mind the strong sensations of pity and horror which you expressed at reading in Commodore Byron's Narrative, some years

ago, the wretched state of the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego; and yet these people, though the most destitute miserable savages on the face of the earth, had advanced far beyond the monkey state, and were too much perverted to be classed with Rousseau's happy *denizens* of nature.

I know that you conceive yourself obliged to those who reclaimed our islands from its pristine barbarity; and you would be sorry that Weishaupt and his illuminati should force you to return to the hairy tunic, and meandering stains of woad juice, which were the decorations of your ancestors. Our houses, notwithstanding the enormous window-tax, are preferable to living in woods; and, though tithes are said to be an *abominable imposition*, yet no philosopher can deny that priestcraft appears now in a more *tolerable* shape than when Stone-

henge re-echoed the shrieks of human victims offered in dreadful sacrifice to the Moloch of Drudism. My thoughts have hurried me away; let me retrace the clue of my argument.

One of the propositions which are attempted to be established, in order to annihilate the present state of things, is that all men are born equal and free. Religion, law, policy, and experience, disprove this assertion. I have before observed, that men are *not born* equal either in strength, health, understanding, or in any physical, mental, or moral quality. We are all born dependent, first on our Creator, next on our natural parents, lastly on the society which extends its protection over our persons and property. With respect to this latter obligation, the situation of an *outlaw* and *exile*, from whom its parent state withdraws its support, is, by the general

voice of nature, confessed to be most *deplorable* and *calamitous*: how bitterly does the first murderer *bewail* this part of his sentence! "My punishment," says, the wretched vagabond, "is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive in the earth." How often has the banished outcast repeated this soul-harrowing lamentation! An exclusion from the comforts of society appears to be a deprivation which even innocence can hardly support. The feelings of the solitary inhabitant of a desart island are delineated with admirable force by the masterly pen of Cowper. Where is the heart that would not exclaim with his Alexander Selkirk,—

"Society, friendship, and love,
Divinely implanted in men!"

And yet these are the blessings which we are required to abandon, for a stubborn proud independence, neither suited to our condition as subjects nor as men. Should we much mistake if we ascribe this manifest perversion of the generous love of freedom to a cold depravity of heart, and a suspension of every noble, tender feeling in the bosom of those who would persuade mankind to break the general bond of vital union, and to live for themselves alone? Can their pretensions to feeling and sympathy be any thing more than pretension, who describe human life as a perpetual conflict of stormy passions, opposing interests, and sinister designs? Where did Rouchefoucault learn his *selfish splenetic* system, that induced him to describe human life as a state of contention, envy, and enmity, in which every hand is armed against the happy and the for-

tunate, and *misery* becomes the only passport to affection. These are, indeed, the conclusions which may be deduced from the insinuation that the great ones of the earth are the illegal, oppressive, tyrannical tormentors of their fellow-creatures, and that the poor have a *lawful right* to all the enjoyments of affluence. Very different is the view that scripture presents. We are there told, that "the rich and the poor meet together, and that the Lord is the maker of them all." The differences of station and enjoyment, which are inseparably attendant on the system of human affairs, will not extend beyond the grave. Such distinctions will not be necessary in our *immortal* state, and that state is alike open to every human being.

I would not affect that style of stoical apathy, which, insensible to the suffer-

ings and privations of the poor, considers the general stock of happiness as distributed with a regular even hand. I know, that in this world many *suffer much* and *enjoy little*, while others are *solacing* themselves with *delight.* I know the anxious perplexities of poverty, the harass of perpetual care, and the pangs of disease; nor could a thousand philosophers argue me out of my conviction, that wealth and power are real advantages. They are, in fact, entrusted talents; and, as such, their possessor must give a *strict* account of them. They are necessary in the present stage of existence, and their *casual abuse* is no argument against their *general expediency.* If the poor man suffers more than the rich, he incurs a less fearful responsibility. If he has less opportunity of enjoying the sublime pleasures of benevolence, his " powerless wish" (to use the ener-

tic words of Johnson) will be recorded. The thorny rough path which he treads has less of pleasure, but it has also less of danger. Goldsmith, in the pathetic sermon which is contained in the Vicar of Wakefield, argues, from the force of contrast, that Heaven will afford a more exquisite enjoyment to the poor and destitute, than it will to the luxurious and happy. This fanciful idea dwells too much on the *material* delights of a *splendid* paradise; but there is some justice in the remark. However, without indulging any sentiment that might lead to an invidious comparison, the poor man has solid comfort in knowing, that the virtues of meekness, patience, industry, resignation, and trust in Providence, which his situation requires, will ensure his present peace and eternal happiness. He has long been taught to consider the rich and powerful as his natural supe-

riors, and as entitled to the rank which they hold by the sanctions of divine and human laws. No envious heart-burnings, no dangerous discontents, no machinations of secret fraud, no desperate actions of open violence, will result from this view of things. That Gospel, which is his principal comfort while "he travels through a barren and thirsty land," tells him, that these very superiors are intended by Providence to be his protectors and friends; and if they fail in their duty, they must severely answer for such neglect at the bar of his Heavenly Father, who will never turn away from the "cry of the poor and destitute."

Such are the alleviations which religion has introduced, to counterpoise the evils incident to a low station. I have already shown the necessity that there is for this inequality, and the

advantages which result from it. They admirably prove the vast foresight and comprehensive views of Providence, who makes even the failings of man conducive to general advantage. Avarice employs its accumulated stores in some extensive undertaking; its design is, to increase its own capital; but by so doing it contributes to the comforts and necessities of thousands. Luxury contrives a scene of elegant enjoyment; dissipation is the end at which it aims; but it gives employment to all the busy sons of trade. Ostentation plans the magnificent edifice, and embellishes his extensive pleasure-grounds; but from the effect of his vanity,

> "Health to himself, and to his infants bread,
> The lab'rer bears."

Even agriculture, the most independent of all employments, courts the protec-

tion of opulence: no mechanical invention, no manufacture could subsist without it, and the sciences would droop but for its fostering care. Without the patronage and munificence of the great, no liberal art could obtain perfection; and, as nations always increase in number when blessed with a good government and equitable laws, a diversity of employments must be invented and encouraged as well to procure subsistence for the individual, as to prevent the general disorder which would result from idleness, that fruitful parent of misery and confusion.

Labour, my dear child, like all the other chastisements of Providence, carries with it a *blessing*. Yet some men have a perverse dislike to occupation; and we see too many evils incident to a state of listless indolence, to wish that its sombrous influence, should have the power

of being extended over the most *numerous* orders of society. I have heard that it is a maxim in China, that if any one be idle in one part of the kingdom, somebody must starve in another; for, they say, the general good requires that every member of society should be actively occupied: Nature not affording any spare subsistence for the maintenance of drones. There is much sound wisdom in this maxim, and Christians ought to adopt it on higher principles.

Nothing is more absurd, or more contradictory to good sense and experience, than the supposition, that a state of inaction, is a state of enjoyment. Only look at all the idle people whom you know, and you will find them, whatever their exterior situation may be, constantly unhappy. You know that I am not speaking of those who dedicate their time to "lettered ease," or to the cultivation of

some elegant accomplishment; for I admire (I wish I could say that I do not envy) their *judicious* choice of *occupation*, and the *happy competence* which has enabled them to make it. But are the minds of the bulk of mankind so admirably constituted, as to be *safely* entrusted with the privilege of leisure? What is the general holiday of the populace? may we not answer, riot and inebriety? What is the retirement of the citizen? too commonly animal enjoyment and mental imbecility. I will not include, in my list of unhappy idlers, all those vainly busy mortals who, having no affairs of their own to transact, kindly bestow their unwearied solicitude in superintending those of others; because, though the utility of their employment is not so indisputable, no packhorse is so laboriously employed; and they never can feel the *insupportable* weight of time,

but in a total dearth of scandal, or in the utter impossibility of forming a little snug party; which events are, I know, of *rare* occurrence.

I would direct your attention to that very pitiable race of beings, who, wanting energy to enlist in the corps of gossips, are employed during their whole lives in killing that monster, Time; and though they most effectually contrive to murder him day after day, yet they find the invincible monster alive again, and their toil, in consequence, renewed every succeeding morning. If these miserable objects mix in the polite pleasures of the world, they go yawning from one public place to another, like Mr. Meadows in "Cecilia;" and though they constantly find every amusement "insufferably fatiguing," yet, with the fortitude of determined martyrs, they *voluntarily* endure it rather than be

tormented with what is worse, themselves. If they exist in retirement, they become victims to every disease and every misfortune that they have ever heard of; the sure signs of all of which, their disordered imaginations find to be plainly discernible in their own persons. No wonder that the *silence* of their habitations is seldom interrupted by the sound of cheerful voices. The mansion of *ennui* is literally a pest-house. Whoever enters into it catches the disease. A symptomatic pain in the foot of the visited brings a correspondent ache in the shoulder of the visiter; and the saucy ingratitude of some servant, whom the sluggard permitted to dupe him, gives rise to many a doleful narrative of similar stratagems and spoils, which banishes every idea of comfort from the compassionate quiet set, that had assembled to amuse

the poor valetudinarian. I have often been amused by observing that even the determined volubility of a *lady* gossip, full charged with most interesting *intelligence*, has been unable to resist the dolours of the house of spleen; and though, like the scold in the comedy of Amphitryon, she made a most *resolute defence*, her tongue has been gradually charmed to silence by a narrative more soporific than the wand of Mercury. What a terrible blank has her countenance then exhibited!

You know that I am too apt to belong to the family of the Lack-a-daysicals; and I suspect you of having some *constitutional* alliance with the same fraternity; but it is not idleness that enables either of us to tell the "secrets of the prison house." As to the cure of this (I hope in some degree) bodily disorder, I perfectly agree with the

poet, that nothing is so salutary as air and exercise:

> "To cure the mind's wrong bias spleen,
> Some recommend the bowling-green;
> Some hilly walks; all exercise.
> Throw but a stone, the giant dies."

Various are the devices which the idle of all ranks contrive, to get rid of themselves; and many of their schemes are as *laborious* and *fatiguing* as the daily task of the peasant. But as these are resorted to more to prevent than to occupy thought, the malady is *rather* increased than cured. From their conduct we may derive a most important advantage, and learn to thank Providence that employment is *imposed* upon the generality of mankind by an absolute yet salutary necessity. Toil sweetens repose. Occupation renders leisure delightful. They who never know

what exertion means, lose the most exquisite part of enjoyment. So far from rest being the chief good of man, the configuration of his body, and the faculties of his mind, prove that he is formed for action. The two revelations which we have received from Heaven, and the tendency of all human laws, are not addressed to slothful drones, but to man in the state of exerting his natural powers. He is presupposed to be in action, and the divine and the legislator are alike solicitous to prevent him from doing what is evil, and to stimulate him to do what is right.

But though employment either of the head or of the hand, is wholesome exercise, and alike invigorating to the understanding and to the muscular system, I am ready to allow, that *excessive unremitting* exertion must be injurious. Yet habit, that grand alleviator of human ills, recon-

ciles us to burdens which we at first deemed insupportable. Do not suppose that a person's lot must be miserable, because you think that you could not support it. In this free country, very few people are forced to remain in employments contrary to their own determinations; and we daily meet with men who are attached to the most laborious and dangerous; nay, it seems as if such occupations communicated the most *impassioned preference.* I may instance this among *sea*-faring people, whose "hair-breadth 'scapes" endear them to an element which we land-lubbers deem so very tremendous. You will in this place remember the Greenlander's relish of train oil, and admire the mercy and the wisdom of that power, who provides for the happiness of all his creatures, even while he consults their improvement. How detestable are those pretended

reasoners, who would deprive a fellow-creature of an *innocent prejudice*, or a *salutary partiality*, which conduces to his happiness, or abates the ruggedness of his path in life.

When you meet with a person dissatisfied with his condition, and aggravating the inconveniences of his occupation, it is at least an even chance that his regret proceeds from natural indolence, and a desire to do nothing. Such a one readily clings to the sophisms of the new philosophy, and is extremely desirous of such a change in affairs as would enable him to say, "Soul take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry." Mistaken Man! the change which is *ostensibly* proposed would, as I have before observed, only impose upon you a necessity for harder labour, and a certain deprivation of your present comfort. But the alteration *really* intended would in-

deed affect a complete transposition, by removing your present superiors, and by making the desperate and the worthless lords over you. The *idle* cannot hope to rise. Those who want *exertion* must always be *dependent*. Those who now occupy eminent stations, owe their rank either to their own vigilance and talents, or to those of their ancestors; and it will be difficult for their competitors to convince the world that they have a right to displace them, unless they can produce a better title, than that they are very spare, and are anxious to become full.

The desire of possessing as large a portion of the good things of this world as we can acquire with a clear conscience is so natural, that I suppose it to be one of the ideas which are implanted in our mind as stimulants to honest industry. The sentiment when sanctified by

religion, and restrained by benevolence from degenerating into worldly selfishness, forms an amiable, useful, and exalted character. But honest industry is a virtue that is sadly out of fashion.

Our dashing men of spirit hate slow creeping ways of acquiring property. They must *strike* some capital *stroke;* set fortune, integrity, happiness, every valuable consideration, upon *one* chance; and either become great people, or, in their own language, *nothing: I* should use a *different* term. The spirit of rash adventure is one of the features of the times, and is derived from that fatal system which despises the bounds of propriety, and laughs at the plain dictates of probity. False ideas of property have given rise to a notion, respecting credit, which militates against the justice of the laws of England, and all our innate ideas of moral honesty. You

know that the creditor possesses a power over the person of his debtor; and if the latter cannot, or will not, discharge his pecuniary obligations, he may confine him in prison All human institutions, my dear Thomas, admit of this principle. If the good of the individual and that of the public come in competition, the *latter* must predominate. As far as we can judge of the plans of Providence, its general course is conducted by similar rules. Only in this it has a manifest superiority over the finite wisdom of man, that it can render *misfortune* beneficial to the person who actually suffers it.

With respect to the laws of our country, in the instance now under consideration, credit is the soul of a commercial nation; and, unless the lender had a legal claim to restitution, or to the punishment of those who refuse it, he

would certainly withhold his pecuniary assistance. The consequence would be, that for one honest man now lying in a gaol, perhaps ten industrious families might be deprived of a loan which would have been the means of procuring them a decent support. For be not so far misled by that false candour which I before reprobated, as to suppose that of the thousands of debtors who are now languishing in our prisons, the generality, the majority, or even a considerable part, are composed of men of integrity, the victims of *undeserved* misfortune. They are *pricipally* composed of the idle, the extravagant, and the unprincipled; a description of people who imagine themselves *licensed* to prey upon the public, who are dissatisfied with the allotment of Providence, and who had resolved to *enjoy* those indulgences which they had no just means to *procure*.

THE ... ROYAL ...

Among the number of *truly pitiable* captives, you will find many that have fallen victims to the above-named pests of society, who dissipated the earnings of honest industry in riot and extravagance, imposed on the confidence of unsuspicious honesty, and then either involved their creditors in the same fate with themselves, or by flight or chicane *transferred* the punishment which they themselves deserved, to the dupes of their dishonesty. Nor can our restrictive statutes prevent such abuses, which can only be remedied by individual regard to the dictates of morality. They cannot, however, be abrogated without causing greater injustice, or, to use a very fashionable phrase, more oppression and cruelty.

A severe, inexorable, rigid creditor, is not a common character in England; but the good-humoured, thoughtless,

insinuating spendthrift, or as we might often justly call him, the unprincipled swindler, gains ground: I should, however, be sorry to see him authorised by law. Ever while you live attend to this noble precept, Be just before you pretend to be generous; and never join in applauding that perversion of truth and morals which gives *precedence* to the *latter* quality. What you give must be your own, or how can you be said to *give* it? and what you owe is not your property, but your creditor's. What equivocal meanness is there in the boasted liberality of Charles Surface! Could no better man be found, to be set in opposition to a hypocrite? 'Tis plain that the new school is ill provided with worthies and heroes. The man who gives away the property which he has fraudulently procured, has the dishonesty, without the courage, of a highwayman;

and he who incurs a debt which he knows he cannot discharge, loses all pretensions to the character of integrity, unless he seriously applies himself, by the most sedulous exertions, and the most rigid frugality, to repay the obligation.

I have often observed, that our modern philosophers have no stoical contempt for the advantages of wealth, power, or even rank. They are not, like Fabricius, enamoured of poverty; and the *empty* barrel of Diogenes would not allure them to choose it for their residence. They stimulate the sovereign people to assert their supremacy, and to dispossess their present masters, from the expectation that talent will then have fair play, and the present privileged orders being dispossessed, new ones will be constituted, who will *immediately* drive back his majesty the people into the state which he occupied previous to

his *transient* exaltation. To promote their design of self-aggrandisement, they affirm that the poor have no interest in the present order of things. In this favoured realm of England they have the strongest interest, I mean a conviction, that while it lasts they shall never want a subsistence: not a luxurious one indeed, for nature does not produce food in such superabundance as to allow *superfluities* to many; but a *subsistence* proportioned to *actual* want. No pressure of public calamity will interrupt this supply; and it is placed immediately within the reach of the aged, the infirm, the sick, the helpless, and all who are unable to derive support from their own exertions. This is a real property, which is secured to them by (shall I say) a *mortgage of all the landed estates* in the kingdom; and to this is added personal freedom and protection. These united causes render

the situation of the British peasant happy and enviable to a degree unexampled in the history of other nations.

Beside this certain and unalienable right to support, it is generally acknowledged, that a greater share of the gratuitous bounty " which wealth bestows on want" falls to the share of the poor and needy of this kingdom, than in any other part of the world. Whether it proceeds from the principles of religion being better understood, and more universally diffused, or from a trait of national character called good-nature, I know not; but so it is, that English humanity, generosity, and liberality, are universally acknowledged, even by those who envy our superiority, or who affect to ridicule our easy credulity and pliability. May we long preserve this honourable distinction! The virtues which are ascribed to us are the virtues of

angels, the imputed errors are only the imperfections of men.

Let me recapitulate what I have said. The poor in England have the same *civil rights* with their fellow citizens. The law makes no distinction, for all are alike *protected*; the gospel of Christ makes none, for all are alike invited to happiness. *Labour* is not a curse, but *employment* is a blessing. The welfare of the body politic requires a *gradation* of rank; but those who are allotted to the humbler offices are not degraded by that designation. On the contrary, there is not a more respectable being than a sober, honest, industrious, religious poor man. In whatever obscure corner he may exist, he is sure to attract esteem, and generally speaking, friendly assistance. Like the rest of his countrymen, he has a real property in the labour of his own hands; or, should that

resource be inadequate to his wants, in parochial support; and it is most probable that he may look to the farther aid of gratuitous bounty. These sources will not, indeed, supply him with *luxuries*, but he has been only taught to require *necessaries*. Happy would it be, if those who have sufficient wealth to procure a superfluity of animal enjoyments, would more generally listen to the voice of temperance, reason, and religion, and, by a *prudent*, as well as a *Christian* self-denial, preserve themselves from the torments of disease and self-reproach. But should a system of luxurious indulgence descend to the lower orders of society, should they, infatuated by the insidious arts of those who pretend to pity their hard fate and few enjoyments, acquire a relish for what they cannot honestly procure, the main spring will be broken, and the machine

must stop. Even if we escaped *immediate* destruction by *famine*, the firm hardihood, the patience, the enterprizing activity, the muscular force, and numberless other properties which are acquired in the school of plain sufficiency, would gradually disappear.

If we consider the *characteristics* of our English noblemen, we shall find reason to acquiesce in the decision of that wisdom which divided the nations of the earth into great and small. The middle ranks of society in this kingdom owe *especial* obligation to the efforts of a generous, high spirited, liberal aristocracy. I have already mentioned M. De Lolme's observation, to the honour of "the Barons of old," that they *imparted* to their dependents and vassals the immunities and privileges which they obtained from the crown; meliorating the condition of others in proportion as their

own was improved. The conduct of our nobles at the Revolution was the most firm, dignified, and public spirited, that can be conceived; and the bill of rights was the genuine offspring of the same virtue which procured the Great Charter from king John. If we turn our eyes to the present behaviour of our privileged orders, we shall find them, *generally* speaking, the friends, the patrons, and the benefactors of their humble neighbours, the encouragers of useful and elegant arts, and the supporters of their country's honour and independence. I wish not to be thought a professed eulogist; and I am willing to allow, that the condescension and affability which mostly distinguish the manners of the great, may not always proceed from real benevolence, but from a desire of acquiring popularity, arising from that *necessary* attention to subordi-

nate classes which our wise *institutions* create, by making the suffrages of the *many* essential to promote the ambitious views of the *few*. The *secret* motive which prompts the affluent to give or to patronize, will make an essential difference in their own account when they appear before the judgment seat of God; but to those who receive their assistance the benefit in either case is the same; and by that benefit they are bound to bless that admirable system of legislation, which, though it cannot purify the human heart, makes even its passions and unruly appetites conducive to general good.

It is not my intention to convert my letters into political treaties; and though it is incumbent on you to form a clear and just idea of the nature of the government under which you live, I feel myself incompetent to the task of

being your instructor. I have already observed that a good idea of its component parts will be your best preservative from the agitating turmoil of *local polotics*. Many valuable treatises are written on this subject. I have derived much information from the work of De Lolme which I have just mentioned. It is, indeed, a strong panegyric ; but as the author points out the reasons for his commendations, and as it is the production of a foreigner, I see no reason to charge the account with partiality. When you are well instructed in the theory of politics, you will be more likely to attend to the practical part with *coolness*, and you will be in less danger of being warped by the misrepresentations of party.

Before I return to speak of the false accusations which are urged against the present state of things, you will perhaps

expect me to say something of the situation of the inferior ranks in foreign countries, especially in those which have been visited by the revolutionary mania; but, as we home-bred Britons see those events through a very uncertain medium, I wish not to speak decidedly. The picture of France during the period of its old government, as exhibited in the different representations of its confessors and its destroyers, is so dissimilar, that we know not where to find a trait of resemblance. With the one, it was almost a standard of perfection; with the other, a vile disgusting portrait of tyranny, oppression, and extortion. Each *successive* democracy, however, which has been founded on its ruins, bears *unintentional* evidence to the important truth, that it possessed one advantage which the new constitutionalists cannot give to their respective systems, I mean *stability*. It

seems to be the fundamental principle of every succeeding faction to inveigh against their predecessors whom they have violently displaced; and, if we merely take their own accounts, more iniquity, corruption, perfidy, cruelty, and tyranny, have taken place in the last ten years, than ever disgraced the administration of the whole house of Bourbon. Probably the constitution in that period had some radical faults, and many acquired corruptions; but the gradual introduction of better motives would have remedied those defects, and all future mal-administrations might have been *temperately* prevented by judicious restrictions. But, though it may be difficult to form a correct notion of the old system, it is easy to have a just idea of the new. A revolution which annihilated all rights, religion, and laws, which despised all prescriptive forms,

which violated all contracts, which confounded all moral ideas, and disowned all obligation, must have given too great a shock to property, character, principle, and custom, to be conducive to individual happiness. Political *importance* is of little consequence to the commonalty. Their comforts depend on those domestic arrangements which have been *violently* interrupted by these tremendous and repeated changes.

One of the inconsistencies into which our wild theorists frequently fall is, the ascribing of the natural and physical evils incident to the present condition of the human race, to the weakness or incapacity of our rulers; at the very instant that they are endeavouring to aggravate those evils to an insupportable degree, by weakening the restraint of authority, which is the most essential curb to licentiousness, and, consequently, the surest

preventive of *extreme* calamity. The reception which this absurd and malignant accusation meets with from the public may serve as a criterion to mark the progress of infidelity. A sincere believer will not hesitate to exculpate his governors from the charge of introducing wretchedness and affliction into the earth. He remembers his own failings and provocations, and he looks to the *correcting* hand of the Almighty. For good and wise purposes man is born to trial; he is the heir to labour, sorrow, disappointment, disease, and death. No system of policy can counteract this decree in a *general* sense, farther than as a course of prudent conduct may moderate its effect in an *individual* instance. All that a government can do is, to protect the governed from public foes, to repress intestine discord, to deter the vicious from committing crimes by

inflicting equitable punishments, to preserve the property of peaceable citizens by instituting a vigilant police, to administer justice with impartiality, to reward meritorious actions with discretion, and to confirm the sanctions of morality and religion.

Wherever the above requisites are to be found in any civil society, a man by uniting himself to it, by yielding obedience to its laws, and by enjoying its protection, raises himself to a degree of distinction, happiness, and security, which he would not have possessed in a solitary individual state. But he neither becomes immortal, angelic, nor (to use terms better according with the phraseology of our opponents) is he possessed of his full degree of inherent perfecttibility. He still continues to be man, combating with all his own natural infirmities, with the elements and the sea-

sons, with all the vexations incident to that fortuitous concurrence of circumstances which some call chance, and with what is the sorest evil of all, the follies, the mistakes, the prejudices, and the vices of his fellow-creatures. If he should call upon his king for help under these trials, his king can only answer, "Wherewith shall I help thee? am I a God?"

> "How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which Kings can either cause or cure!"

Instead of chimerical, useless researches after a perfect form of government, which shall remedy, or rather prevent every misfortune, let us consider what terrible aggravations every misfortune must receive, supposing we were disjointed from society; every man's hand lifted up against us, and our hand against

every man." Let us continually recall to our remembrance all the endearing instances of friendship, sympathy, and assistance, which we have received from our fellow-creatures. We are indebted to society for these blessings; its instutions tend to inspire those sentiments of which we reap the advantage. Let us then cease to complain of the restrictions which those institutions impose, or of the contributions which they exact. They are not the effect of an arbitrary system aiming at peculiar advantage; but the unavoidable consequences of a plan which is founded on the broad basis of general good. To these laws we owe the acquisition, the accumulation, and the protection of our property. They promote and regulate social intercourse. They insure personal safety, as much as human power can insure it. They facilitate the inter-

change of commodities. They are the immediate sources to which we owe the possession of all our civil rights. Let us then consider them as a sacred inheritance bequeathed to us by our ancestors, and let us never presume to touch them but with a cautious and reverent hand.

You know my sentiments too well to suspect that I want a due reverence for the blessing of freedom; and you know that when I argue against it I refer to the *modern abuse* of that *noble appellation*, and not to the acceptation in which it was held by our *progenitors*. I speak in condemnation of licentiousness: I honour lawful freedom. There was a time, in which kings, princes, and nobles considered their fellow-creatures as born to be their slaves. In some parts of the earth these despotic principles are still retained; and wherever they prevail, the situation of the human race is deplo-

rable, almost as deplorable as where it groans under the lash of anarchy. I see no danger in the strongest censure of despots and tyrants, when that censure is clear, determinate, and pointed at real instances of oppression. But why must these scourges of their fellow-creatures always be kings? Can any cruelties exceed those which have been practised by demagogues, pirates, outlaws, and more than all, by the sovereign people itself whenever it has thought proper to step forth and seize the reigns of government? What horrible extravagances, what mad inconsistencies, what cruel acts of injustice, are sure to mark the progress of every insurrection! I was going to produce many instances which disgrace the page of our early history; but we need not refer to that dark period, when man had scarcely emerged from the effects of the incursion of the northern savages. You,

my Child, have seen a ten year's insurrection in France. The bloody details of the Irish Rebellion must be fresh in your memory. And we need not search the obsolete histories of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw for lamentable instances of popular *barbarity*.

If we lived in times when the prevailing humour verged towards passive obedience and superstition, our sophists might pretend to the generous design of *opposing* a destructive torrent. I know they say that this is the case; that arbitrary power is advancing with rapid strides; that manly freedom dares not lift up its voice; and that the intolerant spirit of bigotry and persecution stifles all free inquiry. But they must pardon me if I deem the circulation of their writings, and the impunity of their persons, a positive contradiction to such unsupported declamation. I farther beg

leave to refer to a work which was published by their great apostle Rousseau, about forty years ago, to show that the decline of governments, and consequently the diminution of coercive authority, has been long foreseen; and surely the dreadful changes which have since taken place will justify us in saying that it has been rapid. "I hold it impossible," says the author of Emilius, "that the great monarchies of Europe can subsist much longer. They all affect magnificence and splendour. Every state that doeth this is upon the decline. I could give very *particular* and *cogent reasons* for this assertion, but it may *not be proper*, and, indeed, they are too obvious." I will not call this a prophecy, any more than I should call the confession of a house-breaker a prediction. The conspiracy of which I have so often spoken had then made great

progress; and though a personal enmity subsisted between Voltaire and the Genevese philosophist, they were co-adjutors in that design; the former chiefly levelling his shafts against religion, the latter against civil establishments. What dispassionate person can read the above extract without being struck with the sad catastrophes which have since taken place? And when he recollects that this man acknowledges that the present order of things depends on no firmer ground than opinion, how anxiously must every true British patriot watch over the opinions that are *imported* into this country, lest we should naturalize the fatal system which will add our own to the *falling monarchies* of Europe! How mean, how base must those hirelings be, who, affecting terror to an *imaginary* danger, shut their eyes to obvious and *impending* evils; and, while a torrent of

irreligion and insubordination is bursting upon us, endeavour to break down the only bound which can restrain its fury! Are they not more servile than the courtly parasites whom they reprobate? The adulation of the sycophant can only *corrupt* his patron, and is meant to convert him into the dupe of knavery, not to make him leap down a precipice. But what is the tendency of those writings which teach the profligate, "that the first man who enclosed a field and acquired property did an act highly injurious to his fellow-creatures; that property is the source of injustice; and that all have an indiscriminate right to the possessions of each other?"*

You are now too well acquainted with the nature of democratic writers to ex-

* These are the doctrines of Rousseau and Wieshaupt, and of *some Englishmen.*

pect *truth* in their assertions. It is their general practice to *asperse* the lives of their superiors; and at the commencement of the French troubles, a book appeared which was entitled "The crimes of Kings." At this period also, the faults of the unfortunate Antoinette were blazoned with malicious avidity, and, it is now known, with *unprincipled aggravation.* Even the martyred Louis was infamously defamed! and it seemed necessary for that admirable prince to undergo the severest sufferings, in order to convince the world that he was a *saint* and a *sage*, instead of a *sensualist* and a *fool*. In England the follies and crimes of which our nobility are guilty, are circulated with eager pleasure. "These are your fine people! these are your great folks!" are terms which resound from the lips of the ignorant and the licentious. Some-

times the disgraceful anecdote is as false as it is scandalous. But no one stops to examine its probability. To repeat it gratifies their own bad passions; and the general wish is, that it may be true.

Were I permitted to address those who fill that envied, though in reality pitiable, station, on which the watchful eye of malignant detraction is continually fixed; could I hope that my warning voice had power to penetrate the close envelope of self-indulgence, or to alarm the frigid soul of apathy: I would urge the profligate part of the great world, by the only motives which can have any weight with them, by their temporal interests, by the value which they set on their exalted rank, by their pride, their prejudices, their disdain of the *canaille*, in a word, by all the bad qualities which democrats ascribe to their *whole* order. I would adjure them to wrap their

licentious minds in the veil of *exterior* decency; to impose a politic restraint on their guilty passions, to *affect* a regard for propriety; and, above all, warned by those fearful presages which now so remarkably prove, that "the Lord is King, and that his judgments are heavy upon the earth," let them abstain from contemning the altar, whither they may soon be forced to fly for sanctuary. To those who are awakened to serious consideration by the awful signs of the times, I would address the nobler motives of Christianity, intreating them to sanction, by their example and influence, the only sure curb of violent passions and pernicious opinions. The exemplary few, who, like "burning and shining lights in a crooked and perverse generation," unmoved by ridicule and undeserved reproach, continue to show to their fellow-creatures the true use of

wealth and power, may, with mine, command the prayers of every true patriot, that they may have grace to persevere in their glorious course.

I am not, I cannot be, an apologist for wickedness. The higher the rank, and the greater the information, the more atrocious is the guilt. But have the most *depraved* of our nobility equaled the *infamy* of those who term them "weak, artificial beings, that shed the seeds of false refinement, immorality, and vanity; who pass along with stupid pomp and gothic grandeur, in barbarous parade, rendering the progress of civilization a curse; whose vices and follies make us think that the human race burst like a lawless planet from its orbit, and that it never will regain its proper sphere, till the pestiferous purple, and the proud appendage of rank, are annihilated, and

virtue and wisdom become the only distinctions of mankind?" By whom think you are these observations made? by the virtuous and the wise? No, my dear Son; they proceed from men stained by murder and treason, corrupted by perjury, oppression, theft, and every species of lawless violence: from women (I blush while I own the disgraceful fact) who have cast off all the characteristics of their sex; who speak with contempt of every feminine virtue, who banish pity and gentleness from their bosoms, and with unblushing effrontery, glorying in their shame, dare to *talk* of *virtue* while they *practice* the deeds of *vice*. Shall professed courtezans, shall they who publicly reside in criminal intimacy with the husbands of others, shall they, who affirm that private and temporary engagements of fidelity are a sufficient substitute for the marriage bond, shall

such women set up for legislators, moralists, reformers, and instructors of youth? Shall husbands who publish their wives' irregularities to the world, and not only avow, but commend, the most atrocious licentiousness in that intimate alliance which *jealous honour* used to guard even from the *shadow of suspicion*; shall people who exist by knavery and chicane, shall the most profligate, impious, and detestable of mankind, set up for censors of a corrupt aristocracy? "Ye fools! first cast the beam out of your own eyes, and then ye shall see clearly to pluck out the mote from your brother's eye." Must not the most hasty observer see the invidious motive of such declamation, even if experience furnished no clue to direct his discernment? The morals of the French court during the old government were lamentably dissolute; but since that go-

vernment has been dissolved, immorality, which was previously confined to the higher ranks, is now diffused over all orders. It seemed like a pest attached to the property of the great, tainting all who shared in their spoils. I appeal to the account of Paris, as published by the *professed partizans* of democracy, to vouch that every species of vice, dissipation, luxury, and extravagance, has arrived at a height which was utterly unknown in former times. What a strange disgusting mixture! the name of republicanism, and the manners of the haram; the fierceness of the Spartan, without his economy, self-denial, temperance, and chastity; the effeminacy of the Persian, without his loyalty and subordination. I sometimes *hope* that this unnatural mixture cannot be *lasting*.

Let the conclusions which may be fairly drawn from the above reflections be ever present to your mind; particularly when you are reading any high-flown panegyric upon republican virtues. I do not say that such virtues never existed; but I say that the patronizers of French politics have no pretence to them. France has been for some years the seat of anarchy; she is now a military despotism. She has swept away all the republics within hear reach; and, instead of the government that they loved and cherished, under which they prospered, and produced brave and virtuous citizens, she has *subdued* them to her own *iron yoke*, planted misery in the seat of happiness, and made them subservient to all her capricious alterations. She has invented an order of things perfectly new, portentous, and terrific; the

consequences of which can only be known to Him who "ruleth the earth, be the people ever so unquiet."

I will conclude my letter with a few observations on the origin of government. The idea of the social compact, on which Mr. Locke founds his system, has been, in the opinion of the learned, successfully combated by Dr. Gillies. We, who acknowledge the divine authority of the scriptures, have a *sure* guide to direct our researches; and I conceive we ought *first* to attend to what is there *asserted* in the way of *history*, or *enjoined* in the style of *precept*. It seems probable, that before the flood, and for some generations after it, the patriarchal government prevailed. Probably, as population and iniquity increased, that mild system was found inadequate to repress public disorder. Unquestionably the regal government

succeeded. But whether it was originally of divine or human institution cannot now be ascertained; though, most probably, it was of the latter, since the first king that we hear of reigned after the dispersion of the nations, and he sprang from the branch of Noah's family which was not favoured with divine revelations. Scripture tells us, that "Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth," and profane writers consider him as having been the founder of the Assyrian monarchy. It is certain, that in the time of Abraham, four hundred years after the flood, a king reigned in Egypt, and five kings in the land of Canaan. These sovereigns were all descended from Ham, the reprobated son of Noah; but we must not suppose this form of government *peculiar* to that degenerate family; for we find it also adopted in the line of Shem, four kings

of whose race are mentioned, in the fourteenth of Genesis, as living in the time of Abraham; and that extraordinary person Melchisedic, who is styled "Priest of the Most High God," was also entitled "King of Salem." The regal form of government, has, therefore, the priority; and when duly equipoised by an opposite power, and restrained from degenerating into despotism, it is generally the best calculated to preserve the independence of a nation, to give stability to public measures, and security to all ranks of people. It is least subject to violent commotions: and, though it is not so favourable to the *stern* virtues as a republic, it is better calculated to cherish those which Christianity requires. Charity, gentleness, meekness, complacence, and contentedness, generally spring from an idea of personal security, from the absence of ambitious

thoughts, and from an early habit of obedience and subordination.

For many ages the form of the Israelitish government was very singular, for it was a theocracy. God was the king who reigned over them. His *visible* seat was between the cherubims who expanded their wings over the ark which contained the divine law (engraven on two tables of stone, but not by human hands,) that was delivered to Moses. A peculiar glory bespoke his *more immediate presence*, and miracles were the acts which announced his sovereign power. After many wonderful events, the Jews, who were remarkably stubborn disobedient people, grew weary of this form of government, and demanded a king; offended God, not by requiring such a ruler from the Almighty, (for Moses had expressly declared, that in process of time they should have one, pointing

out his mode of election and solemn duties), but in not waiting his time, thus anticipating the divine pleasure, and rejecting the supremacy of the Most High. Yet the Almighty selected and consecrated their two first sovereigns by the agency of the prophet Samuel. "He upheld their monarchy," says Mr. Bryant, "in an hereditary series; he blessed it and made it respectable among their neighbours. So far from introducing idolatry, it was a remedy against it in Judah; but in the kingdom of Israel apostate usurpers erected and patronized the worship of the golden calves."

The republican form of government seems to have commenced in Greece. It certainly possesses some *peculiar advantages*; but if we consider the civil contests which subsisted among that people, and the ambitious conquests

and violent domestic factions that harassed the Roman state, we shall find no reason for supposing that it is best calculated to promote *individual happiness*, or *general tranquillity*. These discussions are to us Britons rather curious than important. We are *born* the subjects of a mixed monarchy, under which establishment we have long enjoyed safety and prosperity. We could not attempt to *change* the government, without sacrificing much *real* good in the pursuit of a *doubtful* advantage. Our legal institutions guard the public safety from such rash designs, by imposing the pains and penalties of treason on all who adopt them. And whoever receives the Christian dispensation as the will of God, must confess that it every where inculcates, both by precept and example, a peaceable and quiet submission to lawful authority.

With respect to the British constitution: the right of the subject to resist all violent infringement of the fundamental laws of the land was determined at the Revolution. At the same time, the executive power was restricted by such wise regulations, that we have reason to hope no circumstances will ever arise, that would require you to examine your conscience, whether you may be justified in having recourse to the dreadful expedient of resistance. The tide of public opinion has long run strongly against the *degrading* doctrine of passive obedience, and Rousseau has taught us the *irresistible potency* of public opinion. May God grant, that the machinations of our enemies, who now, as in Milton's days, "mean licence when they cry liberty," may not hurry us into the dreadful whirlpool of anarchy!

To conclude the subject. The same dauntless spirit, the same love of true freedom, the same firm adherence to the principles of law and equity, which in former times urged our Hampden, Russel, Hallifax, Somers, Cavendish, and many more illustrious names, to check the bold strides of regal usurpation, call upon every true Englishmen at this period to rally round the throne. Hoping that your soul will be always alive to the impressions of *generous* motives, I forbear to urge the more selfish views of regard to your own safety and happiness. Adieu, my dear Child! Another Letter will conclude this diffuse *intervening* correspondence; and we will then return to our ordinary epistolary communications. Believe me, &c.

LETTER XVII.

MY DEAR THOMAS,

WERE I to follow the pestiferous doctrines of the day through all their various ramifications, I should engage in more than Herculean labour. I trust, however, that what I have done will assist your judgment so far as to enable you to analyze any work which may fall into your hands sufficiently to judge of its *general* tendency.

Some of these doctrines are so shamefully indecorous, that I own I cannot expose them by *particular* reprehension, though I have met with them in translations and in original works, actually

subscribed by a female name. Affecting a sort of philosophical air, subjects are introduced, and terms are used, which I am certain no decent woman would adopt even in the most confidential intercourse. My country women were wont to be remarked for the delicacy of their manners; and the public consider them as the sacred guardians of morals: need I urge them to mark such depraved members of the community by reprobation and *avoidance?*

Among the writers whose extravagant doctrines have not only been published in this country, but circulated with uncommon avidity, loaded with extravagant praise, transfused into a thousand shapes, and insinuated in every recess, the name of Mary Wolstonecraft has obtained a *lamentable* distinction. This unfortunate woman has *terribly* terminated her guilty career: terrible I say,

because the account of her last moments, though intentionally panegyrical, proves that she died as she lived; and her posthumous writings show, that her soul was in the most unfit state to meet her pure and holy Judge. From those writings I extract the following sentiments:—"Who would dare coolly to maintain, that it is just to deprive a woman of her rights of citizenship, and to treat her as an outcast of society, because her revolting soul spurns the tyrannical power of a husband whom she can neither love nor respect, and flies to the protection of a kinder mind? This is one of those prejudices in the present state of society which blast the promise of hope." I will make no other comment on this passage than an earnest prayer, that neither you nor I may ever live to see this *prejudice* removed!

I am often forced to refer to France, because, in that unhappy country, these dreadful doctrines have been reduced to practice. Kingcraft and priestcraft have been annihilated; and the marriage bond is there permitted to be broken, as whim, caprice, petty disgust, or any new attachment, determines the roving imagination to the desire of freedom, or of another engagement. The situation of a married pair where such a law prevails must be most pitiable. Forbearance, tenderness, confidence, esteem, and that lively participation of good or bad fortune, of sorrow and joy, which the consciousness of an *inseparable* union of interests excites, must be annihilated in that bosom which is continually agitated by the fear or the wish of separation. How great must be the anxious jealousy, the constant apprehension of fond attachment; and the cruelty, the

aggravating indifference, the scornful disdain of hatred, determined to provoke its *despised* partner to consent to the desired separation? But there are objects still more pitiable, I mean the issue of such ill-omened unions. Our Maker, when he determined that the marriage bond should he indissoluble, considered not only the comfort of the present generation, but also the dearest interests of the rising one; and he determined not to leave the fortune, the welfare, and the instruction of children, to caprice or casual bounty. He appointed the *existing* race of mankind to be the guardians of that which should *succeed*, and by the sacred tie of child and parent connected times to come with times that are past.

This leads me to make a few observations on the prevailing fashion of

education. I know not whether it be in consequence of a settled design, or purely accidental, but since the time that the enemies of Christianity have been most active, an unusual number of books on the formation of the manners of youth have issued from the press. The attention of the public has been evidently excited by these productions, and a rage for education has universally prevailed. I speak from *actual* observation when I say, that it has decended to all ranks and conditions of life. Were this extraordinary attention paid to the rising generation from good motives, were it conducted on sound principles, and directed to beneficial ends, we might hope that it would produce the most salutary effects. But if it were merely the whim of the moment, adopted because Mrs. Such-a-one's children are so instructed;

if the principles which *are* instilled are a *guarded modification* of those which have caused such lamentable effects; if those are not *instilled* which are derived from those divine precepts that alone can inspire good conduct and real virtue: if the attainments on which the greatest stress is laid are in their nature secondary, if not frivolous; and if, regardless of rank, fortune, and future prospects, every body is to be educated *alike*, I am afraid we shall soon wish to return to the days of the horn-book and the primer; when to read, write, and cast accounts, completed the boy; and the girl's attainments were confined to the routine of plain-work, the sampler, and the family receipt-book.

The days in which this system prevailed were, as I have before observed, days of economy, industry, and subordination. Is it not for the interest of a

nation, that these should be the leading characteristic virtues of the great mass of the people? Is the uninversal diffusion of what are termed accomplishments necessary, or even desirable, in a political point of view? Will they really tend to promote the comforts of the inferior orders? I do not mean the very poor, but of those ranks which now pursue them with such avidity, though it is evident that they cannot be *pursued* in future life without sacrificing essential duties to unimportant elegancies. Prudence, industry, and good management, form some of the most valuable traits in a matron's character, especially if she fill the middle walk of life. Her duty to her husband, children, servants, neighbours, and the poor, will present her with a series of continual occupations; and they will leave her no other leisure than what the offices of religion, the regula-

tion of her heart and temper, and the improvement of her mind, will necessarily require.

If our young men in the same line of life were intended to mount the tribune, to preside in committees, to harangue in clubs, or to spout in debating societies, we would take care to make them smatterers in politics, fluent, specious, and dogmatical. If they were to act as porters to Parnassus, to admit or reject candidates for literary fame, we would try to make them expert in common-place criticism. If a knowledge of gaming in its various branches fitted them for the discharge of the duties of active life, they should make their early *debut* at a gaming-table. If good *eating* and good *living* were synonymous, they should be brought up epicures. But what have any of these branches of knowledge to do with a lad who is to *earn* his subsist-

ence by a *regular* attendance in a shop or a counting-house? Teach such a one what becomes his station. Let him learn the virtue of frugality, and not the vice of extravagance. As he is not intended to be a statesman nor a connoisseur, direct his whole attention to *sound practical* knowledge.

The favourite aim of most of our system-makers, and the design of many of our books on education, is, to *force* a sort of premature hot-bed plant, which will soon sprout, but never possess either vigour or hardiness. This production is totally inconsistent with the British character, the virtues of which, though they ripen slowly, have *stability* to resist the storm. You have, doubtless, heard that Rousseau wrote on this subject, and with his usual inconsistency condemned his treatise by averring his scheme to be *impracticable*: indeed, it supposes such

a correspondence of circumstances and contingencies as never could happen. Among many wild, immoral, and deistical notions, I would do him the justice to say that he has prescribed some good rules, and that he tried to frame a natural, manly, modest character, a perfection which few of his worshippers have attended to. He aimed at inspiring none but clear definite ideas; and this aim, seconded by his own scepticism, induced him to deny the propriety of giving children any ideas of God or religion. He would not permit them to gain the smallest knowledge of their Creator, till they arrived at fifteen or eighteen years of age; and his reason, is, because if you inculcate this belief sooner, they will be apt to confound the ideas of sensible things with the Deity, which he calls idolatry. He had read

the scriptures, and he must have perceived that in them the Divine Spirit, *condescending* to the weakness of man, continually describes the actions of God as performed by *personal properties*. His hand, his eye, his footstool, his throne, his chariot, his memory, his understanding, and the like terms, continually occur. No well-informed Christian believes that these are really adjuncts to his Maker; but very few can raise their thoughts to such a degree of abstraction, as to conceive of him as he *really* is, boundless, immense, self-existing, pervading all space, without form or similitude. If, therefore, we wait till we can form a just metaphysical idea of his nature, before we believe his existence or learn his will, the generality of the human race must live without knowledge, and expire without hope.

Suppose a child conceives of God, as he does of *light* or of *wind*, as something which exists, but which he can neither handle nor define. Rousseau objects to these very similitudes, and yet we know that the Almighty has denoted his more immediate presence by these signs. For ages the glorious *Shechina* rested upon the ark of the covenant; a pillar of *fire* guided the Jews through the wilderness; and an uncommon display of *effulgence* attended the promulgation of the law. We Christians, owe our knowledge of the Gospel "to the rushing *mighty wind* that filled the house in which the Apostles were assembled," and which expressly designated the communication of divine power.

It was Rousseau's design to make Emilius a deist; and, consequently, he sought to keep him free from any prejudices in favour of our religion, till he

should be old enough to attend to the sophisms which would induce him to reject it. Deists will act wisely by imitating a mode of conduct which is founded in a prudent consciousness of the weakness of their cause. A person who has reached eighteen without any sense of obligation to his Maker, without paying him any homage, without referring to him in his words and actions, without any idea of divine omniscience, of future rewards and punishments, or, to sum up the whole, without even knowing that a God exits, will never be in *much* danger of becoming a Christian: I question whether he even arrives at the *decency* of deism. He may constantly say to his instructor. "If these things are so, why did you suffer me to remain ignorant of them so long? Why did you not urge these powerful restraints sooner? Why did you not

early give me those habits of thinking and acting which I *cannot* now acquire? In the book that you put into my hand I read examples of youthful piety; I find that children were employed in the service of the tabernacle; I perceive that the author of the new revelation commands that they should be brought unto him, and declares that of such is the kingdom of Heaven. People are also commended as faithful servants of God because they instructed their children in his worship; and, under the pain of incurring severe penalties, they are strictly enjoined to make them familiar with their statutes. Why then have you neglected this most important duty, and trifled with my best interests? Must I not suspect that you really think this boasted record of divine truth a forgery, and that you wish

to impose it upon *my* belief in order that it may restrain *my* desires, now that you find them inconvenient, though you will not allow that it should regulate *your own conduct?*"

Our reformers have another motive beside this deistical craft, for wishing to keep children ignorant of religion. They cannot open the Bible without finding *all* their tenets *contradicted*; especially those which relate to their doctrines respecting our duty to our parents. For filial obedience is also deemed one of "the unhappy prejudices which blast the promise of hope." Children in this age are born independent beings: restraint is unjust, and correction is cruel. True, they are void of experience; but, as I have before observed, it is great folly to try to direct them by the knowledge which we have *acquired*, for we have no right to *expect* that they

will *respect* our *discoveries.* If you see a child climbing a dangerous height, if you cannot prevent him by removing the object out of his way, let him climb; if he does not tumble, he will learn agility; and if he does, and escapes alive, the *accident* will make a deeper impression on him than your *precepts* could have done. At all events, such children are but exercising their natural rights, and we had better let them perish than bring them up slaves. This argument holds good for any act of mischief which they may do to themselves or others; and with respect to instruction, as we cannot *teach* them any thing without inspiring them with *prejudices,* it is better that they should learn nothing at all. For history only presents false views of things; no child can form a clear idea of geography, or any science which substitutes images for realities; and the best

way of learning any liberal art is by not having the least instruction in it; and then, perhaps, the child may *blunder* upon it and become an *original* genius. The learned languages are determined to be pedantic absurdity. And why? Unluckily, because the classic authors, though heathens, had a great deal of good sense, and enforce tenets diametrically opposite to those of the new school. As for religion, I have spoken of that already; but allow me to make a few extracts:—"The most absurd picture which folly can conceive is, that of a dotard teaching a child his catechism."* "The routine of divine worship, though *childish*, is not only an irksome restraint on youthful vivacity, but it has a *fatal* effect on morals."† The true system is that

* Rousseau's Emilius.

† Wolstonecraft's Rights of Women.

the pupil should lead, and the master follow; the former preserving full liberty as to the choice of books, amusements, and employments."*

So much for a *private* system of education: but there is a still better scheme for a *public* one; namely, that boys and girls of *all* conditions should be educated together, and learn, with very little distinction, the same things. As learning presupposes the idea of a master, one is allowed; but he is to be without the power of *laying down* rules or *enforcing* punishments, which are to be determined in *all* cases by a *jury* of *scholars*. Here the little hopefuls are to be taught the natural equality and future perfectibility of man; that is to say, that they are independent beings, not accountable to parent, guardian, king, pastor, master, or any person in the world; that they

* Holcroft.

have a right to whatever they can procure, and may act, speak, and think as they please. As to the perfectibility to which they are instructed to aspire, the professors of this system are not agreed what it means; some deeming it the summit of *wisdom*, others of *virtue*; and some call it the *power* of procuring immortality. You pretty well know what they mean by wisdom and virtue; but, as they hold that the present corrupt and degenerate state of society will not permit them to obtain absolute perfection in these points on earth, we must therefore exist after death, in order to complete the ends of our being. As strong hopes, however, are entertained that the present order of things will be inverted, the necessity of another life will then cease, and the attention of their adepts is, in consequence, turned to the discovering of a *grand immortalizing elixir*,

which, being aided by regimen, and an entire compliance with the dictates of nature, may enable the human species to live as long as they please. What we are to do for food, room, and various other comforts, will be time enough to inquire about when this said composition shall be completed. I strongly suspect that it will be like Don Quixote's balsam of Firebrass, and that it will have no effect but upon the *initiated knights* of *anarchy*. Perhaps, as they are of opinion that, when mind becomes omnipotent over matter, we may exist without sleep, it will also be found, at the same glorious period, that eating was an *unnecessary* vile invention derived from the *gluttony* of the *privileged orders*. You will suspect that I exaggerate the absurdity of these opinions; on the contrary, I assure you that I have taken them from the most *admired* writers on these

subjects, and have merely put them into *plain English.* You will meet with them trimmed, and glossed, and modified, in the qualifying pages of their gentle polished admirers. You see the principles on which the new system of education is founded, and will consider its claims to *supersede* that which was prescribed by our ancestors, on which I expatiated in my second letter. If the portion of good sense of the respective ages is to be determined by their comparative merits, where shall we hide our lamentable inferiority?

With respect to this contempt for prescription, parental authority, experience, or even this insolent ridicule of hoary age, I defy them to show a nation or a period of time in which the voice of a father, an elder, a chief, or a priest, was not *listened* to with *reverence* "The government of China, that ancient land

of morals, where (to use the language of their apostle Voltaire) divine laws were published before Europe could be said to have customs," is founded upon an extension of the patriarchal system; and filial obedience and respect to seniority are the principles which hold that vast empire together. Even the Hottentots, to whom our improvers were very partial from an erroneous idea that they were atheists, confess the above-named authorities, and treat their *decisions* with deference.

I have already mentioned the opinions of our ancestors; and, in spite of the vapourish censures of these superficial declaimers, our ancestors deserve the epithets of *brave* and *wise*. 'Tis true, the parental authority was in general strained somewhat beyond its due bound; and, of the two passions which should actuate the mind of a child, fear was made

to predominate. But, at that period, the universal turn of thinking tended *too much* to subjection; and, though I do not believe that the great were even then unprincipled, inhuman despots, they certainly possessed a power dangerous to their own virtue and to the welfare of society. The change in the *condition* of the middle and inferior classes of people, which has taken place within these three hundred years, is astonishing; and the changes of *manners* have at least corresponded. When you recollect that six generations have witnessed this revolution, which, though rapid, has been progressive, you will see no reason to accuse elderly people of ill-nature, or exaggeration, for frequently using the observation "that times are much altered since they were young." Most unquestionably they have altered, from bare sufficiency to luxurious in-

dulgence; from general ignorance to universal information; from an almost *slavish* dread to an almost *boundless* freedom. In this change, the gradations of rank, the degrees of age and relationship, have been confounded. In no instance is this difference more visible than in the manners of young people to their seniors, especially of children to their parents. I am continually shocked at the terms which I hear addressed to fathers and mothers, sometimes *impertinently* familiar, at others *audaciously* insolent or *cruelly* unkind. I ask my own heart, whether I had ever dared to utter them; and I bless the memory of my revered parents, who taught me, by *respecting* them, to *know* myself.

To you, my dear Son, I can with pleasure and with pride address these reflections, because I am *sure* you will coincide with my sentiments on a subject

which *tortures* the bosom of many an unfortunate mother. Let love, confidence, and tenderness glow in the filial heart; but never let them *exclude* gratitude, and that modified expression of fear which we term respect. When the latter sensations wholly cease, the former will not *long* remain. Familiarity is one of the reigning foibles of the age. Stiffness changed to ease; this was fortunate; but, as we never know when we are well, like children we go on improving what we have done till we mar it. It is said, that familiarity breeds contempt; and how fully is this proverb realized! for contempt is the predominant trait in the character of our fine gentleman. Whether he leans upon a coronet or on a counter, he seems only born to *despise* others. I have no apology to offer for the supercilious nobleman. His education, his extensive views, the

vast interest which he has at stake, are sufficient to rouse him from the mean apathy of disdain, and excite his ambition to be what God and nature intended; not a self-engrossed coxcomb, scoffing at his fellow-citizens, but their active friend, their guardian, and their example.

For the *imitative* puppy who follows his steps, I offer the plea of ignorance, or, what is worse, superficial *information*. Only acquainted with that style of reading which I have so strongly reprobated, can we wonder at his insolent manners? Can we be surprised at the general contempt of parental authority, when that authority is now fixed on the infirm basis of inclination, and when those who refer it to a divine injunction are charged with seeking to erect a cruel tyrannous power? the influence of the parent is said to

cease with the wants of the child. Does gratitude, does even the uninstructed voice of nature, confirm this assertion, except in the instance of the brute creation, which, being void of consciousness, are not susceptible of moral ties? But I forget; savages and brute beasts are proposed as *models* by which we are to *improve*

I need not be diffuse in proving that parental authority is supported by scripture. The practice of the patriarchs, "the first commandment with promise," the solemn warnings of the prophets, who enforce the sovereign rule of the Deity by giving it a paternal claim; the repeated injunctions of the apostles, and, above all, the conduct and precepts of our blessed Saviour, unanswerably confirm the assertion, that no right can be plainer, more fully ascertained, nor more

strenuously enforced, than the *right* of parents to honour and obedience from their children.

Observe the wise and beautiful subordination which Providence has instituted to avoid domestic contention. Since it is impossible that *two* distinct, separate, independent authorities can safely subsist in one family; if the wills of the husband and wife point differently, submission is the *prescribed* duty of the female; peace must be preserved, and she must yield. If man claims this superiority over his wedded partner from considerations of mutual experience, they both claim a higher power over their offspring, not from any *superiority* of nature, but of *situation*, and for the future advantage of those over whom it is exercised. We are born weak, helpless, and destitute; our parents must protect, support, and provide for us. We are born self-

willed and perverse; and these qualities, so far from being the seeds of perfectibility, are deemed in scripture the produce of *original depravity;* and it is the declared duty of every parent to bow these rebel inclinations to the yoke of Christ. We are born *ignorant;* our parents are again called upon to *teach* us knowledge, not merely confining their instructions to our temporal fortunes, but fixing their eyes stedfastly on that immortal part of our nature which we derive immediately from God. These obligations are imposed on parents; and, as they tender their own salvation, they must fulfil them. If they are judicious, they will adapt their instructions to the different tempers and dispositions of their children; treating an affectionate generous spirit with kindness and confidence, subduing the stubborn by regular coercion; encouraging the timid,

restraining the audacious, but acting justly, and therefore kindly, by all. They will consider too the sphere of life in which they will probably be called to move; and they will endeavour to inculcate such *habits*, and to bestow such *accomplishments* and talents, as are fit and *appropriate* to their expected stations. A course of instruction thus directed, I call a good education. Happy are the children who receive it! blessed are the parents who bestow it! And surely that heart must be cold to the noblest feelings of its nature, which considers the long, watchful, inviolable attention, the care, the tender anxiety which such a course of superintendence implies, and then doubts whether it imposes a *lasting* obligation on the child who has been the object of such solicitude. When the selfish reason of having his own necessities supplied ceases to operate, the in-

violable ties of gratitude must impose an endearing bond of the most lively and lasting friendship, confidence, and love.

Yet supposing that a parent, either through negligence, mistake, or incapacity, does not perform his duty, a child is not therefore released from his obligations. Whenever he becomes acquainted with revelation, he will there meet with a *positive* (not a conditional) command "to honour his father and mother." Doubtless, the same sentiments of confidence, preference, and affection, cannot glow in the bosom of a child who has experienced parental neglect, prejudice, or cruelty, as warm the mind of him who has been ever accustomed to judicious tenderness and watchful care. But it is in this case that the morality of our religion, and that of the modern school, displays the full power of *contrast*; and while the former shews itself

to the offspring of the Father of light, the latter refers itself to (may I not say) a Satanic original.

You must remember, that our philosophists, by giving full ascendency to the passions, deduce virtue not from principle, but from feeling. They scorn the ties of duty as cold, unimpressive, and unsatisfactory. Virtue is with them an impulse of the heart, a kind of *animal* sensation, with which reflection has little to do. Apply these ideas to practice, and you will see, that a man thus guided will, like Dryden's Zimri, be "every thing by starts, and nothing long." Can we depend on the justice, the benevolence, the fidelity, or the honour of a fellow-creature who measures his performance of those duties, not by an undeviating standard, but by the humour which he finds himself to be in when our necessities require his interference?

Suppose that he has heard something to your disadvantage, what can prevent him from even acting *unjustly* by you? Suppose that you require his aid at an instant when spleen, envy, anger, or any other evil propensity, has gained possession of his soul? His feelings are not in unison with your wants; you cannot strike the chord which will make them responsive; and if he does not *feel*, he has no motive to assist you. Suppose a husband causelessly jealous of his wife, (if he could, indeed, ascribe such a weakness to one of *our* philosophers;) no passion is more violent, none has produced more tragical effects. Erase from that man's mind all ideas of principle, and we shall want no Iago to multiply scenes of domestic distress. Are not envy and revenge passions? Can any sentiments excite stronger emotions than these do in the unhappy bosoms which are a prey to such tormenting

feelings? And, if the impulse of the moment is to be the guide of action, will not the English change to the Italian character, and bravoes and assassins people our streets? What vice will you avoid, what virtue will you preserve, if you follow the *meteor* of susceptibility? Feeling and sentiment (let me repeat it) are blind unsafe guides.

You, my dear Son, are advancing to an age in which the passions are most apt to prove *dangerous rebels* against the supremacy of reason. To surrender yourself into their power, is to arm your most violent enemies against your peace, your virtue, and your happiness. The time is fast approaching when nothing but an awful, steady, invigorating sense of duty can preserve you from the dangers and temptations to which the morning of life is *especially* exposed. That religion to which your eye has ever been

directed will tell you, that virtue consists in gaining a *victory* over violent passions; that such victory is productive of a most happy self-possession; and that, besides avoiding the remorseful pangs of guilt, it insures the favour and approbation of God. In this, she tells you, consists the dignity of your being; and by these conflicts you shall aspire to its full perfection. Her voice is confirmed by that of Nature, and by the secret attestations of your own heart. *Inclination*, indeed, when it corresponds with duty, makes an action *pleasant*, which, without it, is only *satisfactory;* but first consider how you *ought* to act, and by observing that obligation you will frequently perceive that it corresponds with your desires. The Christian oftener meets with pleasure in the path of duty, than the libertine or the infidel can in their rebellious courses.

Our sophists tell us, that their scheme of education is intended to *eradicate* all evil propensities, to induce good habits, and, by constantly stimulating the passions to proper objects, to make them infallible judges and wise directors. The result of their cogitations has proved, that it is easier to *affirm* the truth of a proposition, than to explain it by *practice*, or even by a *plausible* theory. Their systems either in politics, morals, or education, cannot tend to *eradicate* evil propensities, because they allow of no curb to restrain them, nor any punishment to subdue them. No care, no vigilance, can guard even a *child* from temptations to rage, to hatred, to covetousness, and to malice; and who that looks into the world can devise a scheme of life which can preserve a *man* from these and many more seductions? Even the *more* amiable passions

are liable to the most fatal and destructive excesses, ruinous to health, peace, fortune, and reputation. Yet these are what the new code of morals commands us to *invigorate* and strengthen. And how are we directed to subdue what are there allowed to be *erroneous propensities?* Why, we are to contemplate the charms of moral beauty; we are to study the fitness of things; and a child is early to be taught to bow to the law of necessity. These abstract ideas are stated to be proper communications, even at that period when the intellect is not sufficiently expanded to admit the idea of the Creator; and it is by flimsy deductions from these metaphysical notions, that the *rejecters* of revelation hope to form their pupils to *virtue*. Are they really so ignorant of their own species, as not to know that in the human heart wheat and tares grow indiscriminately; and

that they who *love* with the greatest cordiality are disposed to *hate* with the utmost vehemence?

Let me seriously recommend to all parents and guardians, who are not infected by the mania of innovation, this solemn consideration: that education is intended to form *immortal beings.* Of course, if they leave out religion, they deprive it of its most valuable part. And let me entreat them to return to the good *old* custom, and make their young charges well acquainted with that sacred book, which, after explaining to us the cause of human errors and crimes, *supplies* the antidote for all our evils. Let them not be discouraged from beginning early, and labouring hard, to make their children Christians, by a false fear of infusing into their minds a *corporeal* idea of the Deity. The symbols which he himself uses cannot be *idolatrous.*

It is of the utmost consequence that the *habit* of piety should be acquired in early life; but there is little danger to be apprehended from narrow conceptions of the nature of God, since time and gradual improvement will *correct* them.

Suppose that a child, from our description, forms an idea of a very powerful, strong, wise, good Being, who is present every where; and ascribes to this man what you tell him of God:— May not this child be convinced that he receives his existence from this being; that he cannot do an evil action without his conceiving it; that he must do many things with a view of pleasing him; that no evil can happen to him without his permission; that all the good which he enjoys is derived from him, and that parents, masters, &c. derive their authority from his ordinances? What prevents a child from understanding these

moral obligations, though he cannot conceive what a spirit is like, nor form any clear ideas of omniscience or omnipresence? Indeed, can any of us? But to proceed. May not a child also be instructed, that he will reap great advantages from obedience and docility, though he is now too young to be able to estimate them; that children *never* were able to guide and instruct themselves; and that his teachers wanted the same assistance when young, and submitted to the same restrictions? May he not likewise be informed, that if he be very good (which goodness you may describe as consisting in all the amiable qualities that are proper to his age,) though he must die, yet after his death he will be happy with God in a better world? I will still go farther; let him also be taught that the Bible is a holy book dictated by God, and that Jesus Christ,

who was God, came down to instruct men by living with them. The doctrine of the atonement is, indeed, too abstruse for a young child's conception; but even a pupil of seven years old *must*, if it is not his instructor's fault, derive great *moral* improvement, and a considerable *extension* of intellectual knowledge, from the historical narrative of our Saviour's life. And where is the absurdity (I speak to Christians, not to Deists) of children forming an early habit of addressing their Maker night and morning; thanking him for his mercies, acknowledging their offences, and begging the divine protection for themselves and their friends? Did I ask where was the absurdity? Alas! I am adopting the cold *apologetical* style of a *midway* theorist, who halts between God and mammon. Let such as *neglect* to infuse into their children's minds a habit of early

piety remember, that, instead of *bringing* them to Christ, they *withhold* them from him. Let them remember, " that praise is *ordained* to flow from the mouths of babes and sucklings;" and that we cannot begin to sow the good seed too soon, nor too watchfully anticipate the vigilance of the enemy who will infallibly scatter tares.

Let me also recommend one other rule with respect to education; which is, that children should be early habituated to ideas of dependence and subjection: not on necessity, as Rousseau enjoins, (for I discard an *unmeaning* reference which can produce no effect,) but on duty. Let them often hear such phrases as, " You must do so because it is your duty;" or, "it is your duty not to do so;" and add, as a comment, " Whatever is your duty, you will find to be your advantage; you are not

old enough to understand how it will prove so, at present; but in time you will grow wiser, and better able to see the reasons of these instructions." A teacher who has inspired a child with full *confidence* in his *veracity* will reap the advantage of such a mode of instruction. By premature reasoning we only suggest a false confidence in a dormant quality.

I will here advert (though it is somewhat irrelevant) to the great utility of illustrating precept by example. The rising generation has received considerable benefit from the general use of little apposite instructive histories of good and naughty children, conceived with judgment, and executed with spirit; which very deservedly supplant the stories of fairies and goblins, and supply the juvenile library with really *valuable* literature. Example is certainly the best means of

instruction at a volatile, thoughtless age; and they are little acquainted with the infant mind, who suppose that it can only be awakened by sensible objects. Let me here again suggest how proper scripture narratives are for the purpose of instruction; and I will close this subject by repeating the observation, that a neglect of religious instruction is a defect in modern education, which no vigilance, no extensive views, can possibly supply. No one scruples to teach children the elements of any science or accomplishment, in which it is proposed that they should be future proficients, at a time when their capacities are so little unfolded, that the *memory* alone is exercised, and not the *understanding*. I could instance all foreign or dead languages, music, and arithmetic. The all-wise God, by recommending early

religious instruction, *enforces* the principles which they pursue in all *other* instances.

And now, my dear Son, let me conjure you to abhor and reject those false doctrines which have of late years assumed such consistence, and spoken out with such unparalleled effrontery. May we not justly fear, that the crying sin of infidelity, assisted in its progress by that cool, lukewarm *neutrality*, into which piety has too generally declined, has awakened those alarming judgments with which the Almighty has recently visited the earth? In this world, individuals must suffer with the community to which they belong: but in this be you a true patriot, and do not add to the heavy roll of your country's offences by your own *premeditated* crimes. Into whatever folly or vice you may be betrayed, do

not, I conjure you, sin upon principle. Whatever views of earthly temporal happiness you may blast by youthful indiscretion, do not deprive yourself of your heavenly immortal inheritance, nor ever cast away the wretch's last hope, repentance! As sure as you now exist, that impious suggestion of the most terrible despair, "the eternal sleep of death," cannot but be a fallacy. *Consciousness* will for ever pursue you; and whatever guilt you *incur* here, you must suffer for hereafter.

The tenets which I have warmly reprobated are not, thanks be to God! generally adopted by my countrymen. The danger that results from them consists in their being artfully modified, and thrust upon the public attention in every form. It is impossible to say where they may not be concealed. In

a book describing the legislation of a new colony, I meet with an *invidious sneer* at the doctrine of a general resurrection. In a poem on harvest-home, the tithe shock was introduced as the property of "the *proud pampered* pastor," and an object of envy to the "tattered gleaner." Few novelists or essayists are free from this contagion; and the prospect which arises from considering the general tendency of periodical publications is yet more alarming. The friends of rational liberty tremble, and seek security from anarchy in those *extentions* of prerogative which they would once have deemed *illegal*. The worshippers of religious truth fear to acknowledge that right of free enquiry which is most dear to their hearts, lest they should see it perverted by licentious impiety. The plain, honest, uninformed citizen, some-

times *confounded*, but never *convinced*, finds his path of conduct perplexed. He hears with astonishment of a new code of morals. He wonders what can be found out that is better than his Bible. He waits to see what it will produce, before he renounces his principles ; and his astonishment changes to abhorrence at discovering the enormous wickedness of those who adopt it.

Two circumstances may excite the alarm of the enlightened statesman who ponders upon the aspect of the times. The doctrines of insubordination, and the habits of luxury daily gain ground. Every order in society gradually forcing itself into that immediately preceding, despises the *separating* barrier ; and, at the instant that it disclaims superiority, acknowledges it by adopting the extravagancies, the follies, and the peculiar

modifications of vice, which marked the higher orders. Aware of the effects of this ruinous propensity, I have endeavoured to give you a *just* idea of the station which you fill, and to make your *mind* and *manners* analogous to it. If I had addressed a person in a more eminent sphere of life, I would have enlarged on the virtues and duties which are more peculiarly incumbent on rank and affluence. I am fearful that I have omitted many points which deserved your attention; and I have not always *expressed* my ideas with the perspicuity, precision, and force, with which I *conceived* them. The sincerity of my intentions has, however, been always the same. My heart has been in the subject, dictating the ardent wish that you may grow up amiable, ingenuous, modest, and diligent; pleasing in your

carriage, affectionate in your disposition, and correct in your conduct. With these ends in view, I have urged you to *form* your character, not on the impulse of the moment, nor on variable capricious rules, the dictates of fashion or of folly; but on *firm unalterable* principles, deduced from those considerations which will *preponderate* after the lapse of thousands of ages.

To you and to your Brother I bequeath my labours: a pledge of my strong maternal attachment. I have enjoyed *one* heartfelt satisfaction while engaged in this pursuit, which results from the consciousness of having discharged *my* duty. Do you, my Children, add the exhilarating delight which will result from my perceiving that you make the principles I have so warmly recommended your rule of action;

and I shall then enjoy a reward far superior to any that fame or fortune can bestow.

To you, my dear Thomas, ever present to me in mind, though distant in person, I more *peculiarly* address myself. The duty of an eldest son is in some degree paternal. The younger branches always look up to him as a model; and the conduct of one often leads a whole family, by imitation, to vice or to virtue. Resolve then, with all the warm sincerity of youth, even in the sanctuary of God, and before his altar, that the fond affection, the deference and esteem, with which you have inspired the hearts of your brothers, shall not betray them into vice or folly. Resolve to be a comfort to the old age of those parents who instructed and supported your youth. By this solemn engagement you will take

the most certain method of insuring your own happiness; and, that God may enable you to fulfil it! prays from the fulness of her heart,

Your ever-affectionate Mother,

J. W.

THE END.

W. Flint, Printer, Old Bailey, London.